



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

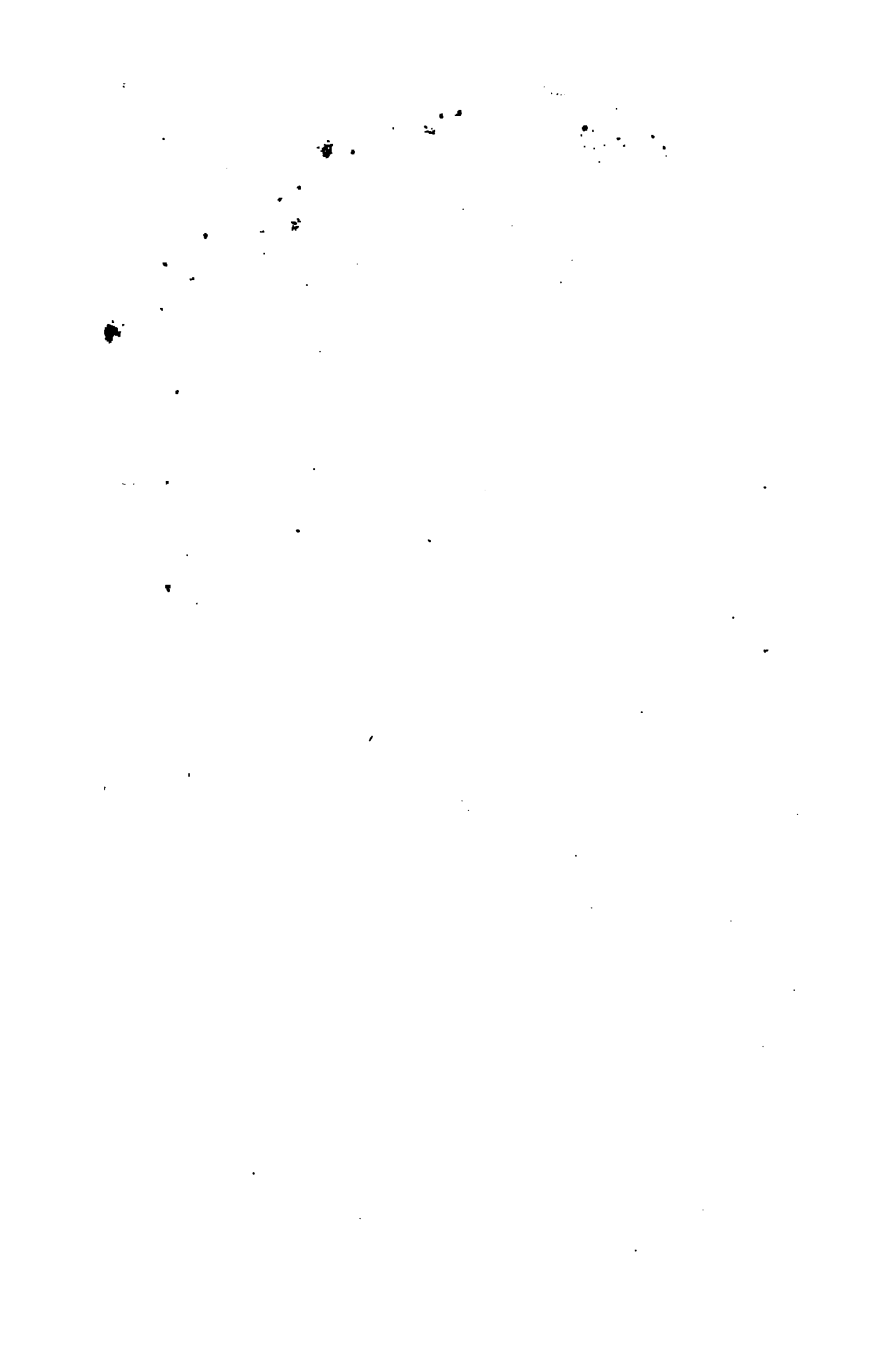
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

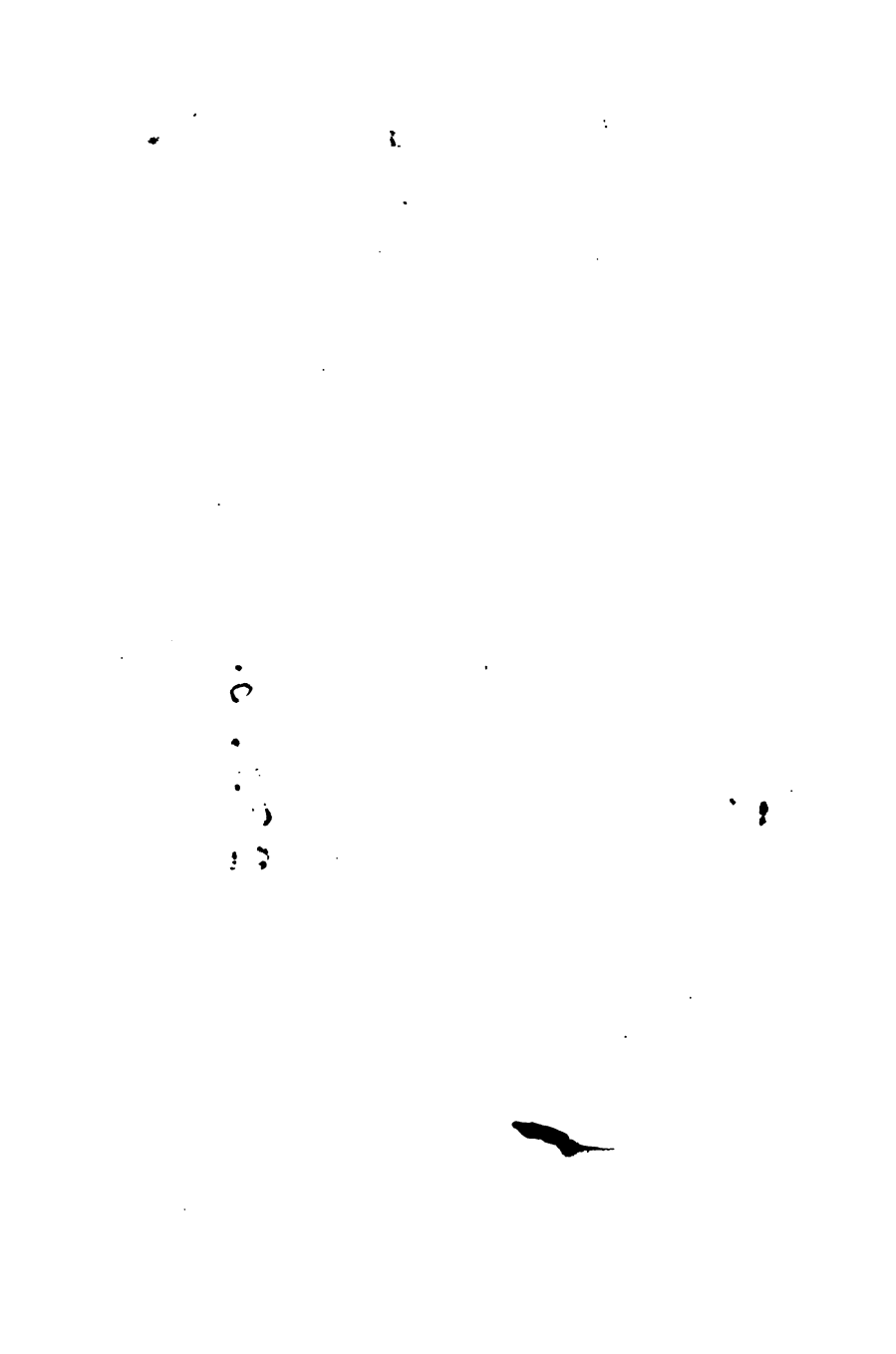
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A TALE  
OF  
TWO FAIR WOMEN

I. CLARA



A TALE OF TWO FAIR WOMEN.



A TALE  
OF  
TWO FAIR WOMEN;  
OR  
"THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY."

---

*A Romance of Modern Life.*

---

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
Where Truth in closest words shall fail,  
When Truth embodied in a tale  
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

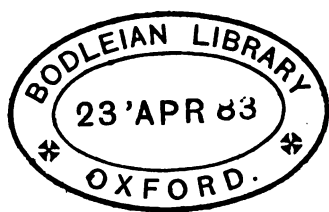
TENNYSON.

DUBLIN:  
GEORGE HERBERT, 117 GRAFTON STREET.  
LONDON: HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.

---

1882.

280.0.926





Inscribed  
TO  
THE MEMORY  
OF  
MY FATHER.







# THE ARGUMENT.



## CANTO I.

*Trinity College, Hilary, 1871.*

1. Supper at "The Cavillers' Club;" Harold's marriage is bruited; waggery of the students.

2. Edwin deploras his purposeless future. Wealthy, he need not work for maintenance, and the prevailing corruptions dissuade him from politics, or ecclesiastics. Mordaunt joins and dilates on the falsity of creeds, of fame, and the folly of earnestness.

3. Edwin becomes enamoured of Clara, a beautiful girl. His love-making dispels all his doubts and questionings; but diverts him from philanthropic projects. The drowning of Edith.

---

## CANTO II.

1872.

1. Mordaunt avows himself a sceptical free-liver, and irritated by discussion with Edwin, who adheres to the old faith, he plots how to test him, and disciple him to his own views.

2. Clara from cause unknown to him breaks with Edwin. His Grief.

3. He pours out his sorrow to Oscar, who treats it with characteristic phlegm. Mordaunt, who had caused the trouble, tempts Edwin to distract his thoughts by revelry. Edwin refuses, and holds that a chastening God is better than a comforting devil. Mordaunt leaving, Edwin hints at a plan whereby in doing good he might obtain surcease of sorrow.

## CANTO III.

1876.

1. Clara, an outcast in London, waylays Mordaunt. She lays to his charge her ruin by an apostle of Comteism : taunts Mordaunt with the result of his theories, and threatens revenge on him and her destroyer.

2. Clara sends for Mordaunt, and renounces the wish for revenge. One Marian has led her to know Christ as her real friend. She, rescued, longs to rescue one friend : expects an early death.

3. Mordaunt recounts his trouble in connection with Clara. He insists on confessing to Edwin the wrong he committed. He describes his coming in contact with the corpse of Clara ; and how when charged with her murder he was acquitted.

---

1871.

---

**Canto first.**

**I. THE CAVILLERS' CLUB.**

**II. RECONNOITRING.**

**III. CONFESSIONS.**



A TALE OF TWO FAIR WOMEN.

M'CARTHY.

Oh ! cook, oh ! cook, we'll crown thee king of coals,  
And Vulcan own thy suzerainty now.  
Cookery was the first art of gods and men,  
Before they loved or fought, they needs must dine.  
Ocean, the scientific know, was pot,  
And earth, they know, gridiron was ; and Jove  
And Juno sat them down to make ragout  
Upon Olympus height, being cooler there.

LABORDE.

I care not for your myths, when earth was young,  
Not yet in stays.

I stand for nature now,  
Whose heart is love ; and I'm beloved of nature.

OSCAR.

What draws he ? "loved of nature" ! well, he claims  
To be a natural : admit the claim.

M'CARTHY.

No claim unchallenged passes here. 'Tis not  
In harmony with our prescriptive rights.  
"The Cavillers" are sworn to carp at all.

OSCAR.

Come ; Ganymede is placing round the wine.  
A forfeit from Laborde of bottles six,  
Unless he prove himself a natural.

LABORDE.

I'm not so level to your level wit  
To be thus snared. Two exits have I like

A fox. I sit between a flat and sharp,  
And so a natural. But better still,  
Nature abhors a vacuum, and I  
Most vacuous was, until by cookery  
I overcame the thing she hates, and rose  
To a most comfortable opposite.

HAROLD.

No more. Plates, knives, and forks, and grosser things  
Are gone.

AUBREY.

We wheel them like our friends aside,  
Until the wolves howl. And the treacherous wine,  
Because it laughs, and ogles rubily,  
We clasp and kiss, and—curse not till to-morrow !

M'CARTHY.

"Teeto," be still. The President has risen.

(*All cry,*)

Chair, chair, chair !

EDWIN, *President.*

Gentlemen, your honour given  
To my unworthy keeping will be kept,  
I trust, untarnished thro' confederate  
Help, counsel, and such hospitality,  
As our good host has made us debtors for.

M'CARTHY.

We've deified him, and repaid the debt !

EDWIN, (*continuing.*)

It is your annual charge to promulgate



Our ways and laws, that so the land may learn.  
 "The Cavillers," first noble band, that gathered  
 Into itself, and crystallised in form  
 The universallest delight of humankind—  
 The love of cavilling extends as wide  
 As man and woman, black, and white, and red,  
 Savage, or civilised.

Not weed, or wine,  
 The gun, or horse ; honour, or gold can boast  
 So exquisite a rapture, as to rail at all !

What need of wings, O Icarus, to fly !  
 Behold us soar above the highest mount  
 Of excellency, and with steadfast eye  
 Outstare the brightest sun, and map his spots.

We bring sweet incense to the envious fair,  
 And smut with smoke her rival's lily cheek.

The barrister, who grieves at fuller tones  
 And more persuasive argument than his,—  
 Forthwith we clap our tube auricular,  
 That jars his rival's voice, and tunes his own ;  
 And makes that "croaking frog" to sludge retire,  
 And hails himself the "Circuit Cicero."

'Tis we who dim the uncurtained window's flare,  
 That else would pain the gazer's tender eye,  
 By interposing shade of skeleton—  
 More grateful than the smoked glass, when the sun  
 Looks from behind the moon's eclipsing orb,—  
 Seen thro' its ribs the gasbright comforts fail

To hurt, and dearest friends can look and smile.  
At bar, in house, in pulpit, wheresoe'er  
Unhonoured dulness droops, our cordial comes.

Of all oppressed, unvalued souls and wits  
The champions we, and comforters are found.  
Do any seek protection at our hands ?

LABORDE.

"A Caviller," I entreat my brethren all  
To give right hands, and welcome to our guild  
A Candidate.

EDWIN.

Wherefore sought our fellowship ?

LABORDE.

Not books, but bats and oars he handled ; late  
The "Heads" bare heavy on him ; bowled him out :  
And some clodhopper, born upon the lands  
That hail him squire-to-be, like a prize ram  
Ribbioned and docketed, returned last term  
And baaed his own renown, the young gent's shame.  
And so the tin mines flooded, stopped supplies !

PRESIDENT.

What others seek our favour, let us hear.

BERRY.

"A Caviller," I entreat admission now  
For one who deems himself the model bow,  
The model smile, the model modulator  
Of all sweet speech to fair ones at the dance,  
Or promenade. 'Tis his ambition, sirs,

No claimant he for special property ;  
 But as he flatters, fain would flattered be.  
 And yet the ladies are obdurate all !

PRESIDENT.

None others ?

M'CARTHY.

Gentlemen, "a Caviller," I

Am confident of open-armed embrace  
 Encircling this my candidate. He comes  
 Of a most numerous stock, whose sons are here  
 In most enthusiastic membership,—  
 A poet, gentlemen, whom no man reads !

PRESIDENT.

"The Cavillers" we, when any brotherhood  
 With us desire, 'tis by our rules required,  
 Some reputation had they must wash white,  
 Or name of good repute drag in the dust  
 With charitable phrases of regret,—  
 For all is done in charity with us.  
 And yet 'tis specially laid down in rules,  
 Whitewashing must be under rule and law,  
 For none is orthodox but such as by  
 Comparison will make us whiter look.  
 Bring in the candidates.

*(They enter.)*

Now, sirs, we ask,  
 As by our rules provided, which you choose  
 To cavil at the praised, or laud the blamed ?

CANDIDATES.

To cavil.

PRESIDENT.

Ah, that is ever popular  
Beyond the other. For a time it struck  
The fancy, and from Judas upward thro'  
The slush, the Popes, and Bloody Mary, the Queen  
"Catin du Nord," and lighter weights that did  
Not sink so deep, they chose for laundrying.  
But 'twas too troublesome.

Whom carp you at?

A CANDIDATE.

Poets.

AUBREY (*aside*).

Ah! poets. All are poets, when  
They're getting feathers!

PRESIDENT.

Whom the gods love, die  
Young. What innumerable poets die in youth!  
Alas! I have known hundreds die so young,—

A STUDENT.

The poet fervour pales on h's brow at death's  
Cold mention!

ANOTHER STUDENT.

No, it rises to white heat!

PRESIDENT.

The down and ready blush was on their cheek,  
And in their hands sonnets, and odes, and epics.

That the gods loved them, dare I well avouch  
 With fullest proof in this—their apotheosis !  
 For having died as poets, they appeared  
 Among the gods of full capacity,  
 To rule a universe, at least a state,  
 Before their hands were steadied on the razor !  
 The advocate will test your worthiness.

AUBREY, *Advocate.*

You seek enrolment on the list of names  
 Of great men in our world, whose glory wins  
 The tongued approval of themselves alone,  
 Unthroned kings, unvoiced sages, uncrowned bards.  
 Have you essayed your strength ?

A CANDIDATE.

In poetry.

ADVOCATE.

So. Good. And been rejected ?

CANDIDATE.

Yes !

ADVOCATE.

'Tis well !

The cavilling has but a bastard heart  
 That was not sired and trained by personal pique.  
 You hymned the moon or else your lady fair ?

A STUDENT.

See, the rouge tint betrays the home of love !

ANOTHER STUDENT.

I swear the Scotchman's proverb answers here ;

"Baith's best," says he. And moon and maid he sang!  
The double dye admits the double guilt!

ADVOCATE.

Thus having graduated, whom do you attack?

CANDIDATE.

Pennysin.

ADVOCATE (*aside*).

Of course! he bowls so slow and easy,  
The Tyros think he's safe. And yet he takes  
The wicket with his smooth and winding verse,  
And sends the Caviller to his tent in shame.

(*To Candidate.*)

You've read his books?

CANDIDATE.

I've read them thro' and thro'.

M'CARTHY.

You've read the books! True Cavillers at books,  
Like harriers hunt by smell, not sight, they say.

PRESIDENT.

'Tis dangerous, friend. True Cavillers never know  
The true intent and nature which they rail at.  
'Tis folly to be wise, when knowledge pricks  
The inflated silk and lets the gas escape.  
Two corresponding members of our guild,  
Huxles and Tinxles, with their handkerchiefs  
Dusted the wayside, and with microscope  
Discerned, and pamphleteering held to scorn  
The whole enginery of paths and roads,

Since painted Britons wore with unshod feet  
The tracks thro' briary woods, o'er stony hills !  
And greater things than these are with them ; aye  
Much greater courses with much smaller knowledge  
They cavil at. Commend me to such members :  
They bring great glory to the railing tribe !

ADVOCATE.

What charge against the poet do you bring ?

CANDIDATE.

That he with baby smoothness babbles o'er  
His nursery triteness of small-worded verse  
And multiplied conjunctions : that he gives  
But trim lawn-shaven men, who speak one speech,  
Like little ponds of varying shape, but all  
Filling their windless surfaces to catch  
The same unchanging sky of unflecked thought,—  
Lost in dull, silent pools the voice of brooks,  
And lively leaps from sloping stone to stone.  
The ornamental waters loosed and free  
With sturdy arms might turn a mill,  
Or water meadows, flushed with clover clusters !  
But not a verse runs thro' our common speech,  
Or helps the wordless lips, or soothes the heart !

ADVOCATE.

'Tis requisite to lay before the court  
Some dereliction of the false-crowned bard.

PRESIDENT.

Who knocks so loudly ?

*(Two Students enter, Talbot and Flury.)*

TALBOT.

Let's pass the members in  
Without a black bean, and to supper straight !  
There's news abroad will pall your palates, sirs,  
And make but funeral meats of all your courses !

FLURY.

We have been ovened at the Provost's, turned,  
And done, and frosted, and sent home in time !  
Such a crush ! A man's title scarce got room  
To turkey-cock itself ; and peacock's tails  
Were simple mortifications of the flesh !

TALBOT.

What marvel if our friend, advancing arms  
Against the heiress, Barbara, was flanked  
By Captain Beamish of the Light Dragoons,  
And done by young Lord Arthur, and at last  
Frost-bitten by a cold look from papa !  
Turned, done, and frosted !

FLURY.

Now for tables turned !  
He, half-submerged beneath a billowy flood  
Of snowy laces by the colonel's dame,  
Stretched piteous looks across the foam  
To sweet Miss Waemar, hearing sweet things said  
By Henry Hunt !

TALBOT.

You failed to reach the gem,



That sparkled in your eyes, and, so you're fain  
To think an equal loss befell your friends !

M'CARTHY.

But what's the news? You came with full-mouthed cry,  
Calling for wine to float your gossip on !

TALBOT.

Oh ! such news ! 'Tis counted by the sex,  
As good as Turks departing "bag and baggage"  
Beyond the blue symplegades. It solves  
The question of supremacy at balls ;  
Until another occupant has seized the throne  
Of reigning belle to be deposed again.

FLURY.

Aye, so the sex ! But I cry shame on him,  
Who robbed our nights of their acknowledged star  
Of planet's strength to shine, tho' moons be bright.

OSCAR.

What rambles his among the moon and stars,  
The moonstruck laddie !

M'CARTHY.

Lunar caustic touch  
His tongue and let us hear the oracle !

TALBOT.

Our Princess Dora is engaged, and bad  
As wedded to some unknown *Bos*, that worse  
Than Dame Europa's garland-honoured beast,  
Takes to the sea, and hides in "foreign parts."

FLURY.

And hides her with him !

TALBOT.

Thus are spoiled the dances,  
Picnics, and races, and etceteras !

FLURY.

I'd pinnacle him for public shame, who did it !  
Or send him to Siberian mines to study  
Their latent mineralogy,—so prone  
To pick up jewels !

STUDENT.

Ho ! engaged.

ANOTHER.

Enraged !

ANOTHER.

Who's done it ?

BERRY.

She had promised to present  
The prizes at our races under wing  
Of Lady Jane.

FLEURY.

Who knows the culprit tell.

All answer, no.

TALBOT.

Our host, see, silent there,  
And blushing sits !

M'CARTHY.

Ho ! curly-headed boy,

Amid the "Cavillers" a traitor thou !  
In solemn conclave for our patroness  
We chose this fair, and by selecting lot  
Deputed you to do our humble suing  
She'd be our crown of honour, and as fit,  
Would match us with a counter band of nymphs,  
What time the invidious name of "Cavillers,"  
Turned gallantly to "Cavaliers," we break,  
One summer day, the green repose of wood !

AUBREY (*aside.*)

One college year, abusing humankind ;  
One summer day adoring womankind !

TALBOT.

To the tribune straight ! arraign him traitor !

STUDENTS.

Confess, confess !

FLEURY.

What says he ? he that stole  
Our queen, and scattered our gay-plumaged doves !

STUDENTS.

Hear his defence.

PRESIDENT.

Say are you guilty in report  
Alone ; and can you cleanse yourself with wave  
Of abrogation. Or only in intent  
Dwells the ill purpose, as a robber's eye  
Glares thro' the jeweller's glass, but breaks no pane ?  
Speak and we hear.

HAROLD.

All evil in the deed  
I heartily disclaim. The deed itself  
I glory in ; as ever patriot dared  
To blazon treason to the tyrant's rule,—  
The same, devotion to his country's cause !

TALBOT.

Now out on him ! 'tis treason to our guild,  
And worse than treason to our chosen queen !  
From many servants to a single master ;  
From many belles, the mirrors of her grace,  
Reflecting and contrasting all her charms,  
To some drear forest with the howling wolves,  
And yet more savage hordes ;—from dance and feast,  
To weary trudge across the hungry plains !

FLURY.

Arraigned, arrested, let him be convicted,  
And straightway borne to fitting punishment !

HAROLD.

Then as accomplice in the crime, good sirs,  
If crime it be, let her stand equal fore  
The council !

M'CARTHY.

Worse ! more heinous still ! he makes  
Insinuation that our queen has blame !  
The crowned can do no wrong ; the minister—

FLURY.

To the tower with him, and let the hammer ring

Its hasty strokes upon the scaffold ! go.

HAROLD.

Gentlemen, of your sweet clemency, I pray  
You hear my speech. 'Tis fundamental law,  
That justice, tho' with bandaged eye, shall have  
An open ear : else shall the poisoning scales  
Undemonstrating be of right and wrong,—  
One scale is filled, but empty hangs the other !

OSCAR.

Hear him. 'Tis ease to make a dying speech !

M'CARTHY.

Hear him, but hang him all the same. No harm  
In hearing, when resolve is a nailed flag ;  
And sooner sink, than change. Hear him. Let'm spe:

HAROLD.

The humble servant of your honourable guild,  
I went on ambassage, unwitting all  
Of danger in the service.

Drawing nigh

To this fair lady, I was wounded deep  
By dagger points, that touched the throbbing life :  
The which I strove with Spartan fortitude  
To cloak beneath a stolid smooth adherence  
To the strict tenor of your businesses  
And came successful, having treaty made,—  
The injury hedged within my own precincts,  
Nor plaint, nor summons for redress preferred.  
But still the rankling wound so inly worked,  
That I to a most learned doctor went.

TALBOT.

Name, name ?

M'CARTHY.

Whence his diploma ?

STUDENTS.

Silence ! Chair !

HAROLD.

Sir, I to a most learned doctor went,  
Who by his auscultation of my sighs,  
And accurate recording of my pulse,  
And inward consultation with his lore,  
Diagnosed, that I was hurt,—the which I knew,—  
Wanted a treatment,—which I also knew :—  
That he was skilful in such management,  
And I most fortunate to be his care,—  
Which I was ready to accept as true.  
He feared it was a complicated case ;  
Would take some time, and be expensive too !  
There seemed a mixture of enchantment in it,  
And I should so ingratiate myself,  
As to obtain an image of her face,  
On which my wound being stirred, with both eyes fixed,  
And breathing charming words, I 'd find relief.

All his behests I faithfully obeyed.  
But when my Esculapius next arrived,  
He shook his head, and let his watch tick seconds  
In his open hand ; and ' did I eat,' and ' did  
I sleep,' and frowned at my protruded tongue,

"So, so ;" he "feared it was a madness grown,  
And to compare foul things with fair, the dog  
That bit you must supply a hair to cure  
This coelebsphobia."

His behests were law.

A golden tress was wound around my fingers,  
And folded in a medicated sheet,  
And laid above the sore.

He came and shook  
A still more solemn nod, and wiser looked  
From under knitted brows, and took his fee  
And recommended change of air,—and went !

*Enter "SKIP" (an old woman-servant).*

Gentlemen, your pardon, sirs ; but it's nigh-hand  
shuttin' time of the gate, and Dan'el 'll be goin'. I  
you 're wantin' anythin' ?

M'CARTHY.

Nothing, my lady, but your own beautiful self, and  
worthy son Daniel to give you away.

SKIP.

Arrah, what are ye talkin' ! it's in your bed ye ought  
to be, and yer nurse a clappin' ye to sleep, poor child !

LABORDE.

Ho ! I 'll give you a nightcap for him, and consign  
him to Morpheus, yourself, Mrs. Walsh.

M'CARTHY.

No, my lady, I mean you for a higher post of  
honour, despite your dishonouring allusions. Would

you hold a queen's place ! I'll raise you to the dignity of a queen.

SKIP.

Man dear, when the wine's in, the wit's out ! spencel your tongue, or it'll stray away from ye, and be in the pound in the mornin'.

LABORDE.

She pounds you, M'Carthy, to a mummy !

M'CARTHY.

You stray from honour, madam ; but I will impound you until I lead you to it. Shut the door, beadle.

You are a widow, madam. I take it by the careful starching of the frill borders of your cap ?

SKIP.

Ye never were more out then ; I'm no widder-woman, but to as dacent a man as ever stepped in two shoes ; tho' he does take a dhrop now and then. So just open the door there, and let me be goin' my ways. Your impidence is well starched, or it would not stand up to even it to me, that I was a widder, and me havin' a man ! Let me go there now !

M'CARTHY.

I beg your pardon ; as a skip you are married, 'Twill suffice. But were you ever married in a queen's place ?

SKIP.

Let me go there with your foolery !

M'CARTHY.

Now, gentlemen, listen. The culprit, who stands



arraigned before the Council ; on whom the sentence is not yet passed,—I propose shall be condoned, and condoled with by the Council.

He wants our queen : the wish is negatived ; but in our clemency the treason is condoned, and condolence in a substitute supplied. And here, jump with our need the fates have sent her ! Madam, I do propose that you be now contracted in alliance with the host of our honourable guild.

SKIP.

Ye'll not gild me over that ways, Mr. M'Carthy ; I want to go my ways ; and Dan'el'll let the Dean know of your actin's and contractin's in the mornin'.

M'CARTHY.

Madam, listen.

SKIP.

I won't listen ; but I hear you all the same.

M'CARTHY.

Don't listen thên, but hearken and hear. This young man, now in durance, held by the beadles—

SKIP.

Mr. Boswell. I know him as well as you. But them's not beadles, nor needles neither.

M'CARTHY.

From the bonds of the beadles we will loose him, to bind him in the bonds of wedlock with you, *qua reginae positionem*, as we say in the holy Latin tongue.

SKIP.

Bonds of wedlock ! Is that all as one as marrying !

You thunderin' vilyan ! what are ye doin' ? Is it goin' to make me all as one as a hathen Indjan with his bigwam ?

M'CARTHY.

Bigamy is the word, madam.

SKIP.

Bigwam or wigwam, I never was in one yet ; and you'll not put me in one neither, Mr. M'Carthy. You've neither priest nor parson ; and I was called in neither church nor chapel. Come, let me go.

M'CARTHY.

Madam, your *nolo episcopari* is—*non-accipitur* in fact. The tailor makes the man, and gives the official rank and power. The robes and crown confer the sovereignty ; the wig and gown the judgeship ; and see here, —the gentleman in cap and gown, registrar of our guild, will by civil enactment make you royally one with our dear cousin here.

SKIP.

It's no civil thing, Mr. M'Carthy, and I'll have ye up in court for it,—no courtin', nor askin' nor nothin'.

*(Knocking without ; a voice.)*

Open to the Junior Dean !

*(Students hurriedly whisper,)*

Put out the lights !

*(Enter Student, disguised as Porter.)*

Gentlemen, complaints of riot and disturbance have been lodged with the Junior Dean, and he desires to know the names of those present.

(*Student disguised as Dean without.*)

You dressed in white, Mrs. Walsh, and so late !

SKIP.

Oh ! thin, an' it's no dress at all ; and Mr. Dean, as it's you that's in the doorway, it's a sheet, as these madcaps was a marryin' me in, save your presence, and me havin' a man of my owns ; as I says, makin' a hathen Indjan of me ! and sure it's not done yet Mr. Dean ; and me a dacent woman to be in court for livin' in wigwams, or to be a divorce ! och worra !

DEAN.

You must be taken to the lock-up for outstaying your time ! Porter, remove her.

SKIP.

Och thin, an' who are you, layin' a finger on me : isn't Dan'el at the gate waitin' for me—and by the hokies, I seen ye laffin' in the moonlight ! ye're just Mr. Allen, and no porter at all at all ! and the Dean 'ill be the same ! ye're thunderin' vilyans all ! that's what I say !

STUDENTS.

Sold, sold ! light the lamps !

M'CARTHY.

Let Boswell go. *Solvuntur tabula risu !*

(*Disguised Students.*)

Boys, be off with yourselves ! Carson below is looking for the Dean to complain of the row. The cad says he can't read !

(*All.*)

Let's be off!

M'CARTHY.

Here's the judge's wig; throw each a shilling in for our unwedded skip, and fly some one, and apply the salve to her wounded dignity before she reach the gate.

---

## II.

*Reconnoitring.*

EDWIN.

THEY'RE gone ! Across the square they bore their riot,  
Spite of the Dean ! Not harm, but boisterous boyhood  
Returns to claim an hour from sobering youth !

Madcaps she truly called them ! while the fit  
Is on, madmen are sane and manageable  
In their comparison !

AUBREY.

Well, the hot blood  
Runs not its lava flood o'er many years  
Of life uncooled.

OSCAR.

Come, come : sit down awhile.  
Take the easy chair. The night is young and mild ;  
And the moon shines to outstare gas or lamp ;  
Sit by the fire or where its soft light falls,  
And talk of this which set the guild ablaze !

EDWIN.

I thought it was a secret none should know,  
Until completion, hurrying on the feet

Of your intention, could outstrip the tongues  
Which buzz around the bride, but scorn the wife.

HAROLD.

'Tis sudden fortune makes the sudden change.  
A friend writes, "Come ! here lies your way of life,  
To make the iron ways in our new world.  
Primeval nature and advancing art  
Here meet for the connubial kiss,—the bride  
Not yet a drudge, but queening it in state.  
Backwoodsman may you be and engineer,—  
Turn from theodolite to 'draw a bead'  
Against the startled deer or crouching wolf :—  
The gradient mark for the 'brute navvy's' pick,  
Or let the 'noble savage' o'er the lakes  
Sweep your canoe with deftly handled paddle."

I flew to Dora, saying, "in two years  
I come to bring you to my longing tent,  
Or wigwam in the wilds." She blushing, half  
In maiden modesty, in anger half,  
"You leave me needless to you, and unworthy  
Enrolment in the vanguard of our life !  
Sooth I must wait for victory to be won,  
Then tenderly allowed to kill the slain !  
I mean to take the rough and smooth of life  
With whomsoe'er I wed. Take me for both,  
Or take me not at all.

Besides your friend  
Speaks marriage 'tween Miss Nature and Sir Art :

I have a woman's interest in a wedding,  
And fain would call on bridegroom and on bride,  
Ere the sweet courtesies turn commonplace."

And so the trousseau with its needle pricked  
The bubble of our secret.

EDWIN.

Well, I wish you joy !

And so your summer morn develops bright,  
And all the landscape of your life clears round !  
I sit in hut of Esquimau, and burn  
Offensive seal-oil lamps, and scarce can read  
On map a tittle of my journey's course !

HAROLD.

Ha ! hear him, Oscar ! squire of Avondell,  
With rent-roll from a hundred watered farms,  
Soil-tillers, and beeve-fatteners giving tythe  
Of hard-earned pelf to his unlabouring hands !

I go, and thankful go, where burning heat  
And deathly cold alternate, there to win  
By toil, in danger, what you safely take.

I go, proud that my chosen goes with me :  
Yet sadness lives with pride, that she must have  
For velvet couch the all-enwrapping snow,—  
For lordly halls the skiey pines, windswept,  
And watchfires of the nightly bivouacs.

EDWIN.

What you count loss, I count a gain ; and what  
You count a gain, I mourning count a loss.

I am no beast to lie in paddock grass,  
Content if full. No work for me to do,  
Save eat my dinners, dine my neighbours, lounge,  
Ride, shoot my new-fledged grouse.

All day I hear

The animal within me braying loud,  
That all is well. But in the quiet night  
The soul takes audience ; asks, " What life is this,  
Tho' clothed and faring sumptuously, when  
ONE asks for usury ? "

HAROLD.

Be yoked then. Pull

The labouring wain of poor humanity.  
Be doctor, clerk, " M.P.," or take a wife !

EDWIN.

The ways of earth are choked. Unless by Wrong  
Of bribe or lie, there opes no gate for you  
To honourable office. And from those  
In need, I would not take the place and fee.

AUBREY.

Philanthropist remains and general  
Reorganiser of society.  
Begin at home. Your villagers and boors  
Wish Christianizing with that charity,  
Which is translated gold : and doubtless need  
That other charity—not half so sweet—  
Of good advice and promulgated knowledge  
Of that much-lauded gospel, " Social Science."



EDWIN.

My father, dying in my infancy,  
Placed such in better hands, which still them hold.

My mother's care nor pauperises poor,  
Nor stallfeeds to a fat disease of lore  
Unreasoning hinds and pale-faced counter lads.

And I—I only chafe at dull inaction.  
My soul full-armoured, sits astride the war-horse,  
And sees the battle smoke, and hears the cry,  
And longs—but waits the trumpet-call—to charge !

OSCAR.

Where swords cut, bullets pierce, and death is victor !

EDWIN.

The end is not in view. But feel you not  
The eager impulse, like a spring power, urging  
To bud and blossom, and to fruitage then ?  
Noble, tho' merely urging, instinct power ;  
For active Will sublimes this strong earth-force,  
And souls can fight the fight and win the race.

OSCAR.

Noble ! Why noble ? save that fools are tricked  
To sweat and drag the chariot thro' the dust ;  
While cunning loungers on the cushions cry,  
“ Excellent ! good as steeds of Thetis' son !  
Pull, Balius ! pull, generous Xanthus, pull !  
None worthier golden barley in the stalls ! ”

EDWIN.

All names enrolled in lists of glory, friend,

Have been of doers, thinkers, lovers, deep  
In vales of woë, as high on sunlit peaks !

OSCAR:

Go write the herd, who eat and drink and sleep,  
The only wise and good ! Man's highest aim  
Is doing nought. "*Nil fecit*" on my tomb  
Be writ : and panegyric brighter shining  
Gleams not upon the hero-praising tablets.

EDWIN.

You jest !

OSCAR.

Jest ! all the conquerors lead their ghosts  
Of slaughtered armies, gibbering bonnily  
Their universal no ! The feed applauders  
Of purple tyrants give themselves the lie,  
Divulging all their busy wickedness !

Jest ! all the murderers shuffle past,  
And mutter no ! The misers clutch their breath  
'Tween livid lips, as if they coveted  
To spend e'en air on speech, and whisper no !

Men ruin, plunder, slander, trick, outwit,  
And all by DOING. Let them but sit still !

One conqueror conquering Rome has had ; the world  
Should mould his statue in the purest gold,  
And build its pedestal of purest gems—  
Fabius, the warrior, who warred by fighting not !  
Happy the country void of history !  
Blessed be the king, whom courtiers never glorified !  
Worthy the men, unknown beyond their fields !

AUBREY.

I fear some would-be member of our guild  
Feed you to write his candidate oration !

OSCAR.

Hush, let me have my rail !

HAROLD :

Throw him not off  
The rail ! his stoker seldom gets up steam.

OSCAR.

Why, civilization is the greatest curse,  
That ever hurtled o'er our race ! Why, sirs,  
If I were one to wear away the flesh  
In volcanic struggle with the bale of life  
To raise the noble Matterhorn of Good  
In the clear heaven of sky-pure happiness,  
I'd preach, "Down with kings, kingdoms ; rase  
The cities. To your tents, O Israel !  
Let every man be executioner  
On him who wanders from his place, or lifts  
Above his fellows !"

'Tis this pestilent  
Ambition to be doing mars the world !  
Ah ! there 's regeneration for the race !  
And only that I hold it nobler, better  
To practise, than to preach a gospel, I  
Might change the world.

EDWIN.

In sooth we 'll find no Alps  
In you protruding icy theories ;

Nor southern lands, that lie o'er hidden fires,  
Bearing the maddening grapes and orange groves !

HAROLD.

But good, sound, level English acres, fit  
For wheat and rye and broad-backed oxen, chiefly  
For home consumption !

OSCAR.

Homely things we want !  
Brown bread and white ; good beef and mutton too !  
These are the great commodities of earth.  
We want good roads to carry household stuff ;  
Not gossamer fictions to the stars, say I.  
We want ten thousand bricks to build us comfort ;  
One diamond heirloom is enough for care !  
Not worth a rotten fig your statesman's finesse,  
Your philosophic reams, your moon-milked verses !  
And so say I, why grow the costly grape,  
When cheap husks fill the troughs for swilling hogs !

EDWIN.

Men, hungry, crave the husks ! but still when full  
Beside the swine-troughs, swine we cannot be  
Completely for contentment. "As our bane,"  
One says with peevishness,—“proof of our greatness,”  
Another sad opines,—we picture straight  
A place and order where the soul has food,  
A father's arms, the ring, the robe, and feast.  
To guide home someone somehow, somewhere, is  
My whole ambition.

AUBREY.

Be a poet, burning  
With zeal intense to insinuate a creed ;  
Sing it to the music of your poesy ;  
Float it like blazing spirit on a stream,  
That men shall stoop and drink it as it runs,  
And grow intoxicate !

EDWIN.

Ah, had I genius !

HAROLD (*looking out of the window*).

Whose strides are these across the grinding gravel ?

AUBREY.

Ho ! those extended elbows, broadening out the gown,  
And tassel swinging from the tilted cap,  
Belong to only one. The moonlight seems  
Conscious of its unworthiness to light  
So great a man. Daylight should always tend  
Upon his steps !

EDWIN.

Whose herald may you be ?

AUBREY.

Mordaunt ! Can any ask who Mordaunt is !  
Or where he's been ! You will afflict his soul,  
If you should seem uncognisant of all  
His movements, thinkings, heresies—the storms,  
Volcanoes, pestilences, that o'ersweep his mind—  
Hurl his material frame from place to place,  
And kill all previous doctrines which he held !

HAROLD.

He's been to Paris now two years are gone.

AUBREY.

Two years in Paris ! Once inside its walls,  
The thought of difficulty to escape  
Would rouse necessity at risk of life  
To try balloons, or bladders on the Seine :  
All lest the world outside, bereft of him,  
Should pulverise to chaos. Then the city,  
Forsaken, like a pining child, appeals  
To his maternal instincts, and between  
The volleying hosts he'd take his fearless way !

He has a nostrum for each sore of life ;  
Can make a creed ; can formulate a science ;  
And organise a state in half-an-hour !

And only seeks this small indulgence given,—  
Bound to no duty, tethered to no place,  
And never asked to cross where lie afield  
The slain opinions of his yesterdays !

EDWIN.

He looks our way.

AUBREY.

Your white face at the glass  
Has caught his eye ; and now like man-of-war,  
With full sail spread, he steers full down on us.  
Aye, wave the hand, surrendering at discretion.

HAROLD (*Mordaunt coming up to the rooms.*)  
The stairway gives its honour to his foot !  
Listen !

AUBREY.

Woe to the sleeper, if he missed  
That jubilant reception !

Mordaunt here !

MORDAUNT.

You knew of my return. Of course. Ah, here  
All are gone wrong ; dead, dead in fact ! 'tis sad !  
France was in danger : now 'tis home ; no life !  
The world is all awry !

AUBREY.

Now you have come,  
There's hope.

MORDAUNT.

Yes, yes, of course ; but cannot stay  
For long. I'll do the possible. Alas  
The world is all awry. 'Tis very sad !  
I cannot compass everything everywhere.  
“ *Nihil humanum*,” don't you know.

Look here,

Philosophy is snoring fast asleep.  
Instead of taking from the trembling hands  
Of palsied creeds the cup of life's elixir,  
She lets it drop to earth like common rain !

EDWIN.

Could any help in your o'erburdened functions ?

MORDAUNT.

My aim in life is to enlist among  
My succourers the foremost men of all

Ranks, ages, and conditions.

I direct,

Advise : that is my forte. The man who's made  
His mark,—I am his fortune, he my aid.

I waste not time on tyros, unknown men.  
The last debater, who has sprung to fame ;  
The latest author, who has drawn a tear ;  
The new philosopher, who's broached a creed,—  
I could give hints to these. But sooth I find,  
“ *Hoc genus omne irritabile.* ”  
But 'tis my mission and I persevere.

AUBREY.

Noble resolve ! ere you had honoured us,  
Our converse turned on this our friend, who mourned—

EDWIN.

You mock me !

AUBREY (*aside*).

No. In generalities

He spreads thro' overweening vanity  
Into unlimited bog. But once withdrawn  
And banked in narrow channel of discourse,  
He'll run a rapid stream, that drains the sides  
Of toilsome treatises, and sky-wrapped questions.  
Let's try, for none can augur this or that.

(*To Mordaunt.*)

Our friend here mourns a trackless wide expanse  
Spread from himself, the central only dot :  
All lines diverge from him to infinity ;



And all converge to him from everywhere.

He stands alone ; none call to him for aid ;  
And from the heavens no magic ring descends,  
Which seizing he may draw catastrophes  
With wild denouements to serve his craze !

*(Aside.)*

There is a bait, and to the hook he draws.

MORDAUNT (*complacently*).

Sir, honour me. I shall be happy : Now——

EDWIN.

We talked to wile the night away ; and warmed  
Our hearts with thoughts and hopes of young ambition,  
And imaging our aspirations turned  
From cloud to substance. But to spread them now,  
And ask the influx of your great experience,—  
Ah ! from the ocean depths of your great mind,  
And larger knowledge, straight a springtide sets  
That cools our shallow waters, which had lain  
Upon the yellow sands with glowing sun  
Burning above them.

MORDAUNT.

There is time ere twelve.

'Tis not my custom for a young career,  
Until the capabilities, capacities  
Are feathered well, and sinews tried in flight.  
But I would ask what course your spirit points.

OSCAR.

He wants some independent post at large,

Where he may physic an immoral world,  
Quite free of charge, and safe from lucre taint !  
A shepherd folding lambs, and pasturing sheep  
With no base calculating on the fleece.

I earnest quote to him the pastoral song  
Of her who lost her sheep, and recommend  
With strenuous voice the primitive advice  
To "let alone."

Aubrey would tune his pipe  
Or break his pipes and hogsheads in the street !

MORDAUNT.

Write verses ! 'tis a silly thing at best,  
Unless you write the ballads sung in flare  
Of gas at dramshop corners, or at fairs  
And marketings, where pumpkins aid with mouth  
Wide open, the unpractised ear ; such pays !

EDWIN.

The trade 's not prosperous, Aubrey friend ; and yet  
Had I your genius I would fire the world.

MORDAUNT.

Genius ! The world has had enough of that  
To light the fires, and do the cookery  
For twice a hundred years.

Revolving wheels  
Drag trains, drive mills, propel sea-going barks  
By antediluvian sunlight. Coalmines, sir,  
Alone obtain celebrity just now  
In literary spheres. Dig, dig for coals ;

Not make them, as a young world-flaming orb !

A genius only meets with cursing lips,  
"Too hot his tropic climate ; there is fear  
Of sunstroke." Him they shade with dun dense clou  
Of malice,—crush spitefully his doings, thoughts,  
Beneath deep strata, poverty and care  
And long oblivion. Then let bookmen come,  
When he is dead and gone, and kindle safe  
Behind the bars of their cold verse his thoughts  
To burn with proper regulation heat,  
Their orthodoxy as thermometers  
And safety valves protecting humankind !

HAROLD.

You speak small merit in the writing tribe.

MORDAUNT.

Sir, there 's not a puffing poet of the day,  
But drives his ferry-boat for penny fares,—  
Short voyages in cheap editions suit,—  
By conservated heat of older bards,  
Whom critics mobbed and populace ignored,  
Tho' rearing giant fauna, pickaxed now !

If you 'd be honest past the common, friend,  
Collate the sayings forcible and good,  
Congeners to the topics of the day,—  
The metaphors and grinning witticisms,  
The glowing pictures and strong arguments,  
Attaching still the rightful owner's name,  
And closing with a prim-voiced homily,—

You would be honest and relieved of toil,  
But not so glorious, nor so rich by half.

A few good shillings mixed with base alloy  
Produce with ease a dozen counterfeits,  
And lo, the swindler elbows from the bar  
The jog-trot earner, working at a trade.  
But stealing is not theft where all are thieves !  
To walk in peacock feathers is not vain,  
Where daws taboo the stranger's ominous voice,  
Attach the brilliant plumage for their clan,  
And walk in meekness of unquestioned fame !

AUBREY.

Kidnappers are abroad, but authors too !  
Gypsies there are who steal the thoughts of men,  
And he once laid in down, on silver served,  
Runs, eats, and lives his life in animal  
Originalities, a rough thing now,  
Cast out from all the smoothnesses of life,—  
In Dryden's, Cowper's, Pope's, or Coleridge's  
All splendid, sumptuous mansions reared,  
He's stolen to live, or rather herd in verse  
Of—well I'll name no names. I'll leave it blank !

I would not be a gypsy. But the thought  
That lives, obeys the primal law of life,  
And generates its kind, when soul meets soul !

I would not bastardise my child and blush  
To own its parentage. 'Twas Shakespeare's, say.  
How does the ecstatic soul thrill to the sense

Of highest joy, when these grand wooers come,  
Immortals from their starry homes of fame,  
To wed us, daughters of men! and we low-born,  
Yet with capacity of nobler things,  
In rapturous confluence of souls conceive,  
And with parturient agonies bring forth  
A child of light,—the father's features there  
Traced in each lineament we proudly show!  
'Tis lawful wedlock. 'Tis a living child,—  
Not waxen figure, hideous because like,  
Tho' so unlike.

## MORDAUNT.

But where are thoughts worth theft,  
Or fatherhood in prose or poetry?  
Unless as merchandise think nought of them;  
And what pays best is best, or new or old!  
"To be or not to be: that is the question!"  
A line much quoted, yet a common man  
Might write or speak the same full fifty times  
A day, nor know himself akin to fame!  
There's fortune's cursed inequality!

## AUBREY.

Had Hamlet only said as much and such,  
He might have had the luck to've been your fellow,  
And lived with equal fame, and died in peace,  
Nor been these hundred years a troubled ghost,  
That every mouthing spouter summons up  
In tea-room Endors!

MORDAUNT.

Well, what after all  
Is Hamlet? Why adown the crowded street  
One walks in every ten. You see him move  
With puzzle in his face excruciate ;  
And then he lifts his head with purpose high,  
And stamps his difficulties in the flags.

But at the corner, he's Hamleting again,  
"To be or not to be."

AUBREY.

I have a book  
In which I am a debtor to the sun  
For painting miniatures of friends,  
And notables, who like the lofty stars  
Which shine familiar at the cottage pane,  
Are also friends,—'tis these alone I keep.  
And so the photographs from Shakespeare's light  
Are all of men and women whom we know.  
Perhaps some little extern difference  
In wearing the apparel of the mind,  
Its vacillations or hot-headedness,  
Before our eyes ; but the mere fashions change  
No more than when a beauty's curls,  
Like hoydens, romp around her cheeks and chin ;  
Or all her wealth of hair is spread to bleach  
And whiten on a chignon's sacred mound,  
At the *mot d'ordre* of Parisian dames.

MORDAUNT.

Ah ! well, just photographs. But any one

Can photograph,—focus the mental lens,  
 And then you have the character defined  
 Of him you 'd picture. Simple process, quite !  
 I could, like Shakespeare, draw the visage, form,  
 And act,—you smile !

AUBREY.

Forgive me, sir. 'Tis “scorn  
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes !”

MORDAUNT.

Ah ! prejudice ! all prejudice ! Why, sir,  
 I could like Shakespeare write. But where's the use ?  
 One Shakespeare has fulfilled the need of the world.  
 Why multiply, and multiplying, therefore  
 Depreciate. Were kohinoors as thick  
 As pebbles on the strand, where the wave rocks  
 The cradle of the deep, what queen of Ind  
 Had burdened her tiara with its weight ?  
 Were pyramids built o'er the world, who 'd hire  
 A donkey and ride out from Cairo ? Who ?

OSCAR.

The world knows nothing of its greatest men !

MORDAUNT.

The blast is blown. Why hurt the labouring chest  
 To raise new echoes in the empty void !

AUBREY.

Had I an alpine horn to fill with sound  
 The listening mountains of the peopled world,—  
 To blow one blast with full distended lungs,

Then lay the cowherd's cumbrous organ down,  
And hear those grand ethereal voices roll  
From pine-clad slope, and snow-crowned virgin heights  
Reverberated echoes, deifying  
My once poor tones,—if 'twere not death, I'd sit,  
Still as Egyptian god with folded hands,  
Listening, rapt high above all meaner things ;  
Till Truth, again o'ershadowed, called to rouse  
Eve's warning to the nations from their Lord !

MORDAUNT.

'Tis easy thus idealising ! come  
To fact. Imaginative honey is  
Full sweet : but figurative bees, complete  
Should carry stings. Admit a maddening joy  
To fill the popular ear with hum of fame  
From our buzzed merits—buzzers there, be sure,  
Do carry stings as well as tongues ; and heated  
By July passion, will, with swift protrusion,  
Insert a poison, swelling out the hand,  
That carried sugar in December cold !

AUBREY.

I know it. I have seen the cruelty,  
But know a joy can blot its memory.  
We've seen the low-born, shrew-mouthed courtesan  
With shift and changes to the low, mean tastes  
Of the multitude, anything for gold and praise—  
Exalted ; riches, adulatory speech  
Poured round her purple dais from the hands



And lips, forsooth, instructing whom to honour !

While the true wife, driven from the halls of fame,  
Bides for her time, albeit thro' want and sneers !  
Aye, one of those, who feebly walk, and halt  
Sometimes to catch the failing, hard-drawn breath,  
Because enwombing what the gods inspired !

A mighty birth ! yet, but a puling infant  
To the bleared eyes of critic midwives, one  
Of a different breed from them and theirs.  
“ Pah ! illegitimate,” they cry. “ A bastard.”  
And cowards tweak his nose, and twitch his hair,  
Because he feels beyond the common ; gives  
A larger surface to the cruel foot !

But ha ! he grows,—the thews and sinews strengthen ;  
The lumbering gait has quickened to a tread,  
That rings the hero's heart from even the flagways  
Of men's cold, hard lives. There's a foot speaks manhood :  
There too an eye has lightning in it ; make  
It flash,—the thunder of his voice shall tell,  
That tempted ruin crushed the overbold !

And she, the mother,—mother of a king,—  
Sits calmly now, too much content to scorn  
The feeble fools, that run with marriage records,  
Certificates of baptism, and all else  
To prove,—where only such fools needed proof,  
And only such fools unperceptive be,  
That this obtrusive proof of honesty  
Is but obtrusive proof of crass injustice,—

To prove her clean, affianced duly in  
The Church; brought home, perchance, without the torch  
And nuptial song clandestinely, to live  
Until the heir stand forth and claim the throne,  
And place Bathsheba at the king's right hand !

MORDAUNT.

Then all the fools, big with conceived importance  
Of windy fatuousness, have right to dandle  
In the world's face their blubbering babes when born,  
And claim allegiance on the logical plea,  
That kings have been obscurely born,  
These, in obscurity, are therefore kings !

AUBREY.

Let the fools be. A fool was never done  
To death. The stock is tough and numerous,  
Nine-lived like cats, with catlike power to fall  
Well-balanced on its feet, and save its neck,—  
Ready to steal and sip the cream again !

The world will never fail for want of mud ;  
But lose in't jewels, price of continents !

The weeds no tendence crave of gardener's hand ;  
Let him look to it, or they'll choke his flowers !

OSCAR.

I'd choke the flowers, destructive of all ease ;  
Let live no plant, that cannot live alone,  
Or wakes a hubbub on its class and prize !

MORDAUNT.

Much credit to the wise, the wit you give.

The fool, the dullard has the skill to live.  
 But these grand seigniors of the race succumb,  
 Tossed in the pool, without the vulgar knack  
 Of puppy dog to sprawl their untaught limbs  
 Enough to keep their heads above the waters !

AUBREY.

To everything its fitness. The eagle's brood  
 Will splutter in the stream, the fish in air,—  
 Each foreign where the other native is. .

Set kingly heart and royal intellect  
 Upon the thrones which they were born to fill,  
 Around them servitors in purple clad,  
 And the awed world will listen to their law :  
 Set them by waysides knapping stones to crop  
 The ways of life,—and any boor's their better !  
 But there be blind, who will not see, and blind  
 Who cannot see, the fault lies in the work.

A razor's an unhandy tool to lop your branches ;  
 The fool, 'tis, curses, when it draws the blood.

The racer flounders in the marsh, and asks  
 A bullet cure for broken legs, and leaves ;  
 The cart, a donkey had drawn safely thro'.  
 Preserve your stables by right harnessing !

EDWIN.

Which brings me to my point again, what yoke  
 Shall I lay on my shoulders ?

OSCAR.

None, say I.

Obeys or floundering in the marsh, you'll mourn,  
What pity 'twas you were not born an ass!

EDWIN.

Oscar! I only want my question's answer.  
I can't endure this purposeless activity,  
Mere undulations of a shoreless deep,  
Where the four winds of heaven alternate rage.

Oh! that some strong Euroclydon of woe,—  
Aye e'en of woe,—would drive me on, on,  
Unswerving in its wild persistency,  
Until I'd rise upon the solid shore,  
And shudder up, and break a foam-white soul.

HAROLD.

Hail not such spirits from the vasty deep :  
Or ere the tempest comes, go lay your head  
Upon its pillow one night more, and sleep the sleep  
That shuns the storm.

OSCAR.

Oh Morpheus, glorious god,  
To idleness nearest in kin and grace,  
Come deify us, and uplift our spirits  
Above all mundane worries; we will sup  
With gods in thy resplendent dream-built halls,  
Or without weariness run round the world.

I yawn and bless thee. Send a poppy wreath  
To wind on Edwin's work-enamoured brows.

EDWIN.

Is it a curse or blessing? Stay its power  
On hovering wings, until to-morrow night  
Has gathered all this goodly company  
To sup with me.

---

III.

**Confessions.**

SCENE.—*The Sea-shore at Bray.*

DORA.

HAROLD returns from city purchasings  
By train at eight. I told him he would find me  
Like seabird perched upon a moonlit rock  
Somewhere along the strand, should he forego  
His ride, and foot it by the path, that skirts  
Bray Head.

'Tis the last harvest moon I'll watch  
Queening it over this happy shimmering sea.

EDWIN.

Do not discourtesy, I pray, to yon  
All-glorious sun, as if no tender grace  
Were his to tempt you to the shore or hill  
Altho' so busy with his autumn tasks,  
He takes his evening leisure pleasantly,  
Like father home to share his children's joy.

DORA.

A beauteous evening ; but such loveliness  
Has too much dying sadness. There is unrest  
In all its charms. There is the expectancy

Of the grey cloud and darkness swallowing all.

But in the night, when the orb'd moon rides high  
There is a rest and calmness in the hour,  
That tutors me, how undismayed the heart  
Should kindle hope, and scatter clouds, or line  
Them all with radiance, and o'er troubled seas  
Pave the bright course to heavenly homes of rest.

EDWIN.

Oh there is no death in evening, only sleep.  
There is no life in the night ; a dead man's face  
Gleams in the dusky hour, when healthful cheeks  
Are viewless,—such pre-eminence to moons !

Life is in the infinite variety of hues  
The bounteous sun throws rich o'er land and sea,  
Each latest tint outvying all before  
To be outdone again ; until he falls  
Asleep, and leaves the tintless queen of night  
To dupe by half-lights, as a faded belle  
Thro' gauzy veil shows her diminished charms.

DORA.

Rail at the moon ! I am suspicious moons  
Have done you harm, since last we met, dear friend ;  
Or I have read astray the signs and marks !

EDWIN.

I've gained no harm, since last we met, sweet friend !

Let me be partner, till we Harold find,  
And guide your feet along the yellow sands,  
And tutor you to understand fair Eve.

DORA.

Come. Evening hours make culprits wish to roll  
Their burdening tale on sympathising hearts.

By murmuring waves along the yellow sands  
I'll hear confessions !

EDWIN.

I confess no harm  
Or wrong to you, fair priest, or any other.

DORA.

Well, I'll turn penitent, and straight confess,  
I've heard a rumour. I am guilty too  
Of close observancy on all your ways  
To justify the rumour or reject.  
And so I leave to you the grace to speak,  
And make the rumour tale authenticate.

EDWIN.

Dishonest tongues have pilfered all my story,  
Which I had treasured up for rare surprise.

DORA.

'Twas not of you the tale went, but of her,  
By one who mentioned yours, a stranger's name  
To them, supposed to me. And I withdrew  
From further tidings lest the alabaster  
Of a friend's dear joy should prematurely break,  
And let the fragrant ointment waste itself.

Reward me this auspicious hour and place.  
Was ne'er cathedral filled with melody  
Of rolling organ, like this deep-toned sea ;



Mosaic pavement never gave the foot  
So pleasant treading as this wide-bayed shore  
With sand firm beaten by the trampling wave ;  
Never pillars were so grand as yonder mount  
On which rests the great dome of sunset sky.  
Now let us hear the tale.

EDWIN.

Oh woman's will !

There is a something, bird or spirit, caged  
So lately in my heart, it beats its wings  
In tremulous alarm at every chance  
Approach. And like a child I am afraid  
To ope the door, and take the fluttering dove  
Outside the imprisoning wires for eager playmates  
To gloat upon the beauty of my prize.  
'Twill surely burst on waving wings, and seek  
Its home ethereal in the snow-white clouds.

DORA.

Oh fear me not. I have a caged dove too ;  
And I will give you cunning lore to tame  
The pretty thing, and make it need no fence  
Of wire, but fly with free wing at your call,  
And coo its tender lovenotes in your ear.

EDWIN.

Then listen, friend.

Aubrey it was and I

Who joined with buckled knapsacks to eschew  
Trains, cars, and boats ; forswear all tourist charts,

And break away among the hills and glens,  
And skirt the undesecrated shores, and climb  
The unpolluted mountains : live the life  
The common peasants lived in the thatched hut,  
And by the peatfire hear their unkempt talk.

My heart was full of sad unrestful thoughts.  
Not a cloud loomed, not a blast puffed at me ;  
The waters of my life were smooth as glass,  
And yet they heaved and broke on troubled shores.

I knew not why,—I only knew 'twas thus,—  
Unless it were the elemental thrill  
From other souls, that writhed beneath the storm,  
Blowing from unseen skies o'er distant seas,—  
Like the rough groundswell, tumbling in our bay,  
While yet the sun shone, telling that the winds  
Are piping, waves mad raging otherwhere.

We'd talked it o'er at college, thousand times.  
We'd planned our systems,—beautiful portmanteaus  
To carry troublesome impedimenta.  
But ah ! the ugly bulksome facts would not  
Be crammed, or broken into nice proportions.

We sowed the seeds of wisdom ; planted trees  
For glorious growths, all in the smooth, deep sand  
Of theory,—easier tillage than  
The stubborn soil of actual life, which draws  
The sweatdrops. Our domain, planned, tilled and  
trimmed  
All in a day, laughed at the slow results

Of patient husbandry—all in a day,  
'Tween tide and tide . . . and in a night 'twas gone,  
Swept smooth of trace, save sodden leaves washed high,  
And branches, that we set for forest trees !  
Poor child's play on the shore, our theories !

I was sick at heart, and glad of summer's call  
From babbler's din, and restless city life.  
At Aubrey's beck, I wandered aimlessly,  
And only sought to throw the sleuth-hounds off  
The scent, and find some peace among the hills.

We found a glen, which like a sea-green lake  
Washed the dark base of circling mountains,  
A calm, secluded glen. The fairy race,  
Which—as the redmen of the prairie lands  
From white encroachers flee—fold up their tents,  
Retreating from the insolent advance  
Of unbelieving Science, here had lodge,  
Peaceful and hallowed. Theirs the magic power,  
Which kept in winter's frosty tempests, green,  
The holly, sole leaf-bearer on their crags :  
For them the mushroom spread the festal board,  
A table round, ringed by the circle worn  
'Neath footfalls of the merry banqueters.  
There travel-wearied pilgrims came to bend  
At holy ruins of monastic piles,  
And holier tomb of one, whose dying words,  
Faint uttered 'mid the heathen to the band  
*Of few but faithful followers, who preached*

With him the gladsome message of their Lord,  
Were, "Cast ye my coffin to the winds and waves,  
And they will bear it to my native land.  
Preach ye undaunted, till the suns have set."

Without or sail, or oar, or guiding helm,  
This funeral bark across the barren sea  
Held its mysterious way. The passing ship  
Crowded its deck and swinging yards to see  
The strange procession slowly sweeping by,—  
A sable swan between its lifted wings  
Carried the bier, and laid its arching neck  
To touch the sacred lid. A summer calm  
Smoothed the rough billows in its halcyon course,  
And tender lunar lights burned thro' the dark ;  
A soft low melody, now grieved him gone,  
And now gave glory that he found his rest  
And guerdon. Lovely forms, all masked in cloud,  
Peopled the air ; and grand majestic men  
Strode by with solemn gladsomeness.

Such awful sight the sailor saw at sea.  
But in the glen, a day at twilight hour  
Unearthly music wafted from the shore,  
Called sunburnt reapers from the stooks to see  
What looked a tiny shallop on the waves,—  
Bright dolphins oared it with their fins of gold,  
A mermaid steered, and mermaids round it sang.

With the ebbing tide they left it on the beach :  
And as the sad sea drew its waters back,

From where the billows smote against the rocks  
And jutting capes, there came a cry, deep-toned,  
And low, and long, as of a last farewell.

A whitehaired priest, by hasty summons drawn,  
Headed a trembling troop with shielding cross,  
And 'neath his muttered prayers they raised the lid,  
When lo ! a quivering light upon his brow,  
Their long-lost, ne'er-forgotten Abbot smiled  
Serenely on them in unbroken sleep.

'Mid simple folk, and legendary lore,  
The days sped by without one vacant hour ;  
But still I lived in mail of proof, aware  
The assassin crouched, poniard in hand, to slay  
My momentarily unguarded peace.

I needs must keep the drawbridge always raised,  
Else trooping thoughts had rushed to seize the tower  
And madden me, mocked by their rude soldiery.

While such my mood, our valley thro' there rolled,  
Breaking the stillness of its deep repose,  
The circling wave of tongues with tidings voiced,  
That from a distant land a stranger maid,  
Fair as the Autumn's rounded moon, had come.

You've seen, when the receding tide has scooped  
A hollow in the golden-sanded shore  
Wherein a weary wave has sunk to sleep,  
A flint-white pebble on its tranquil breast,  
*Fall, by the hand of sportive infant dropped ;*  
*The startled waters roll their tiny circles*

On to the swelling margin, where they sink  
To sun-gilt slumber lapsed again, and leave  
The snowy pebble glittering undisturbed.  
So came she with the rippling talk around,  
And then in her sweet glistening innocence  
Was left ; and the calm valley fell on sleep.

Stranger she was to me, but with her came,  
Friends loved and true, whose wedded years had borne  
Abundant harvest of all other joys  
But chiefest her, the sharer, and in part  
The source of this their travel,—her who first  
Had lit their happy home with infant smiles,  
And made it ring with laughter : a fair girl—  
Before or since a fairer child I saw not,—  
But in her large and tender eye of blue  
There ever dwelt a soft and liquid light,  
Such as pervades the river's waveless pool,  
Holding a mirror to the unclouded heaven ;  
And on her cheek there came and went the flush,  
Vermillion-tinted, which to waxen hue  
An added beauty gave and won the same ;  
And oft there seemed a melancholy tone  
To mingle e'en with childhood's joyous bursts ;  
And, as it were, her spirit deemed it drew  
Nigh to some unknown land, there came a pause  
In which thought sounded, not as is the wont  
Of early years, the unfathomable deep.

But the changed scene wrought hoped-for changes  
in her,

And she was all a happy-hearted child  
Again.

'Twere long to tell of sunset hours,  
Of rambles o'er the rocks ; of peeping down  
The precipice to see the giant wave,  
Dwarfed by the distance to a tiny thread,  
Drawn shoreward ;—or of being borne beneath  
Stupendous cliffs in fragile, oar-urged barks.

In all was Clara, and with her in all  
Was I. It was my hand, that stayed her feet  
Upon the slippery crags ; my arm upheld  
Her wearied on the rugged mountain side.

And so it was, I grew to love her, Dora.  
And so—yet how it was, I cannot tell.

Love came upon me as the dawning steals  
Into the heart of night, and none can say  
When ceased the night and when the day began.  
So gradual was the rising of my love  
Until it rolled in the blue heaven of life  
Without a cloud to dim its lustrous ray :  
And every high aspiring thought of mine,  
And every inmost dell was flooded o'er  
With the warm golden light of answered love.

And in that light I basked and sunned myself !  
Oh ! how my very being seemed to change !  
It was as if my whole past life had been  
A frosted winter : then the spring-time power  
*Scattered the snows, and broke the streamlet's chain,*

And summoned forth the scented, pencilled flower,  
And clad the forests in a robe of green.

Dora, I loved her, and was loved again !  
And all the gold-dust of those olden days,  
Which I had left to every mountain stream  
To wash away into oblivion's sea,  
She gathered up, and wreathed of them a chain,  
Linking herself with all that I had been,  
As if in some mysterious partnership,  
Unknown till then, we two, aye side by side  
Unseeing and unseen, had passed our years.

I loved her, and the purposes of life  
Took shape and order. Life till then had been  
A lyre of golden stings and silver tone,  
Which still with my untutored hand I struck,  
And listened to the sound each separate note  
Sent forth ; for yet I had not skill to link  
Them into harmony. That lyre she took,  
And with a winning gracefulness her hand  
Swept o'er the strings ; and tuneful note with note  
Moved hand-in-hand, a flower-crowned choral troop.

DORA.

Oh, Edwin, I must bid thee pause awhile !  
What, Edwin lovesick ! I could marshall thee  
A host of mocking jests and saucy phrases  
'Gainst woman's power, which I remember well,  
With claim of wisdom true as Solomon's,  
Thou didst array in olden time,—these now



Would soon o'ermaster their deserting chief.

But answer me. This glorious sun of thine,  
This wonder-worker in the stream-swept ore,  
This Orpheus on the magic lyre of life.  
How looked she? What her eyes and cheeks and li  
Oxeyed was she, like Juno? Peachen bloom  
O'er velvet softnesses on either side  
Of the twin-channelled doorway of her breath?  
Full ruby lips, that jealously enclosed  
The ivory whiteness of her teeth, or else  
Disclosing, stole full half the admirer's gaze  
Unto their beauty, and yet losing half  
To them,—the eye not knowing which, the pearl  
Or ruby most attractiveness possessed?

Come tell me all. Her voice was low and sweet.  
She moved like Homer's goddesses by will,  
Without apparent aid of vulgar feet!

EDWIN.

Ah, Dora! I in hospitable bower  
Unbuckled all my armour, and laid bare  
My heart,—wilt poniard me defenceless all?

DORA.

Men rail at women, when with tinting brush  
They emulate the hue, which time has stolen,  
Or nature never gave;—or mould the form  
To comelier lines;—or spread the peacock train,  
Wide swelling round the diminutive, dusty daw!  
But let the railer feel the magic touch

Of his fore-doomed enchantress, straight he makes  
A goddess of her ; more than human is she ;  
Never was glance of eye, or folded hair,  
Or bloom of cheek so captivating seen.  
They put a music in her voice unowned ;  
They find a grace and meaning in her words  
Unknown to all her mind . . . till disenchanted  
By fault, perhaps imaginary like the grace !

EDWIN.

But, Dora, nothing have I said of voice,  
Or face, or form, or mind in her I love.  
I know that she is beautiful ; and prize  
I much the quiet rapture that it gives  
To look and think that beauty all my own.

An honest man, God's noblest work is called :  
A lovely woman is His fairest, then.

What painting, tho' the grand old master's hand  
Transformed his most enchanting vision and  
Transferring, made it live upon the canvass,  
And thus bequeathed a heritage of joy  
To generations after, can the ever-new  
Delight afford of one sweet face we love.

DORA.

A goddess is beyond a picture, sir !  
What height Olympian doth she favour now ?  
How came the parting ? When to meet again ?

EDWIN.

The parting was in sorrow not our own.

One day we sat upon the windy shore,  
Watching the Alpine-statured billows roll  
Their avalanche of snowy foam to land.

My little Edith had her wonted seat  
Upon my knee, when suddenly she spied  
A band of seapinks in the creviced rock,  
Hid from the gale which roughly romped around.

She ran to cull ; then child-like wandering on,  
Still adding to her store, was drawn apart.

A gust swept by. I saw it rudely seize  
The careless child. A moment and she stood  
Parting the ruffled curls from off her eyes,—  
The treacherous wind held light her stolen hat  
On a low reef, that sloped into the sea :  
So close it lay, she ran : then further off—  
But nearer death—it lay, and still she ran ;  
Until far down the rock she stands and looks,  
Her hat recovered—lo ! the treacherous sea  
Uprears a towering, rushing, roaring monster,  
Its feet black with the trampled sand and weed,  
Its savage fangs gnashing, its tongues hissing !

She turned :—I saw the blanched cheek, the mouth  
Open with bootless cry,—then calm and swift,  
The little head firm carried, and erect  
The frame, she moved, as soldier forced to yield  
To multitudes, but scorning flight retreats.

We gazed, struck dumb a moment,—paralyzed  
*The power to think or move,—but only feel*

The Horror drag, crush, grind the quivering heart  
Between its cogged, remorseless, mighty wheels.

And steady still as soldier on the march,  
The firm foot pressed upon the slippery weed,  
The sweet child bore her pale face up the reef,  
While swift behind the wide-mouthed monster rushed.  
Then the white fangs gnashed, closed, and she was gone !  
Gone !—a wild shout leaped from my unchained lips :  
The sympathetic cliffs repeated it,  
And called the startled succour hurrying round.

Madhearted, ere the treacherous wave withdrew  
His broken waters, levelled on the shore,  
To bear away his spoil with backward sweep,  
I plunged amid the tangle, floating weeds,  
And sand, and hissing foam, to grope where sight  
Availed not,—hither, thither fruitlessly  
Plunging ; wild clutches at the submerged stone,  
That showed white ;—footing lost, and helpless splash  
Down in the mocking waters ;—then the dizzying rush  
Of the receding wave, flecked dark and white,  
Dazzling the eye, deafening the ear with noise  
Of clattering stones, hustled by the torrent sea !

Last in a shallow, where a rock had caught,  
The weeds heaped round her, there the drowned child  
lay !

Swift striding I was by her. Stooping low  
To raise her, a confederate wave dashed heavy,  
And threw me ; rolled me o'er and o'er ; against

The rough ledge stunned me, ravishing the prize  
Out of my senseless grasp.

Then Clara sprang,  
And seized me drifting seawards, swept my face  
From blinding hair and smothering water ; held me,  
And as my scattered sense returned, my dazed  
Brain heard her cry, "There, there she is." Again  
Instinctive at the sound and sight I rushed,  
But only knew the waters closed me round,  
And as a great wave lifted under me,  
I clutched at something whitening on its crest.

They told me afterward, the surge had swept  
Us shorewards, and a seaweed gatherer,  
Come breathless in his haste, first of a troop,  
With the long rake wherewith he plies his task  
Caught us ; and many hands then bore us up the  
beach,—

Together, for my hold upon her dress  
Fastened, unyielding, till they tore and left  
The fragment with me.

DORA.

As a rent flag prize it !

EDWIN.

Borne home, the unwilling life in each  
Back from the verge of icy death was drawn,  
And incoherent ravings broke the night  
With fragmentary utterances of fear  
Still turbulent, to the first hour of dawn.

Bright summer suns had risen and set,—I felt  
My limbs strong under me, but every nerve  
Jarred at the sudden sound of cricket chirrup,  
And a nameless dread, a haunting fear clung close,  
Like the leaped leopard on the giraffe's neck !

But she, who in the casket of her life  
Had locked the love of all, drooped ! Aye we saw,—  
But each was leagued against his eye, and each  
Suborned his tongue to speak his wish, the thing  
That was not, all in dread of that which was,  
His fear,—of that which was, and thrust itself,  
With cold and stern persistency of fact  
On our regard.

DORA.

From swift death snatched to meet  
A slow decay, and give the painful bliss  
Of tendence, and to speak the parting words  
With sorcery power to stab, to kiss,—to burn, to soothe !

EDWIN.

We parted for our separate homes and lots,—  
They sadly with the blight upon their flower,  
To watch it drooping, fading day by day :  
We, truly sad with sadness not our own,  
Yet joying in the opening bloom of love,  
That still unfolds its opulence of leaves,  
And lavishes its fragrance in our hearts !

DORA.

And when at hand the consummation day ?

EDWIN.

Soon as the spring re-decorates the earth,  
A festive hall flung open to our bliss.

DORA.

And where the glooming clouds and breakers now?

EDWIN.

Gone, where I know not in the azure vault !  
Hushed, not a ripple breaks upon the shore !

DORA.

And all the high ambitions? they too gone?

EDWIN.

We think it ill of precedent to build  
A Babel tower. The flood that sweeps above  
The highest mountain peak would laugh to scorn  
Our puny architecture. Human woe  
Is human lot ; and lighter lightly borne !

DORA.

'Tis easy doctrine for the standers-by !

EDWIN.

We plan no selfish hiding from our kind :  
Where'er the bond is, that we recognise.  
Around our home, the poor, the sick shall know  
A ready kindness.

DORA.

It was the world !

EDWIN.

We count it folly to outpour a cup,  
Tho' brimming full, in the world-circling sea,

And think to hide the multitude of sins,  
And sorrows by the charitable waves  
Upraised to higher levels. Still the sun  
Would stare upon the festering carcases,  
Left bare along the pitiless tidal shores !

One puff from bulging cheeks would never clear  
The dismal heavens of black, low-hanging cloud !

Our fingers thrust between the iron cogs  
Would never stop the drag of grinding wheels !

DORA.

It may be ! 'Tis a poor philanthropy,  
That loves salvation at another's cost,  
But spares no farthing from the full, clasped purse !—  
Glib-tongued to praise the gallant leap that robbed  
Marauding billows of their helpless prey,  
But cautious lest a single drop of brine,  
Hastily wrung from the deliverer's dripping hair,  
Should dim the gloss upon our prided garb !

And yet—and yet, 'tis pity there are few,  
Hale-limbed, whole-hearted with the human love  
To do for man, what Edwin hoped to do !





1872.

---

*Canto Second.*

I. DIGGING THE PIT.

II. JILTED.

III. CONSOLATIONS.





## CANTO II.

### I.

#### Digging the Pit.

SCENE—*Edwin's Rooms, Trinity College, Dublin.*

MORDAUNT.

WHAT is truth, and where is truth ? I ask.  
The deep sea wave's unbroken blue is kept ;  
But where the shallows are, like vanity  
Of human life, the surge uplifts itself  
And topples o'er ; and all the blue is lost  
With groans in mud and sand, and grinding 'stones !  
Life has colour, which the eye can see :  
It ends—and ghosts gibber in the shades !

AUBREY (*aside*).

He has got a craze brand-new since yesterday !

EDWIN.

What is truth, and where is truth ? we ask  
With Pilate ; and with Pilate go, and leave

The truth unclaimed with Him, who is the truth.  
But He sits calm above ; we toss below,  
Scarce floating on the treacherous brine of life—

MORDAUNT.

A storm-god puffs at us, and down we sink !

EDWIN.

Well, sink thro' waves : but waves are possible,  
Because upholding in its unpierced urn,  
The great earth gives them to the sporting winds  
To toy with. Sure I am a purposed plan,  
Perfect as is the rolling, rounded earth,  
And strong as valleyed mountains, circles us.  
No drop is spilt, no life is lost.

MORDAUNT.

No drop

Is spilt, you say. No life is lost, you say.  
The more the pity then, say I, if aught  
In life be wise but "seize the passing hour."

Aye dig, delve down deeper than miner works,  
And cut a passage thro' the encircling plan,  
And spill the gathered tears and groaning sighs  
To sheer vacuity on t'other side ;  
That not a solitary drop be found  
Of life's elixir.

EDWIN.

Spoken like a man

With perfect faith in naught, but his own ken  
*Of all he knows not, inverse ratio !*

To build a house, or e'en a paper boat  
To please his dabbling boy will cause him doubt  
As to proficiency : but make a world,  
Or launch an ark with thronging man and beast,  
Can give no pause. One Phaethon the Greek  
In legendary records has bequeathed ;  
But every club of beardless orators  
Now boasts plurality of charioteers  
To drive sun, moon, and stars, and plunging comets !

MORDAUNT.

Again I cry, do let them ! Jump, I cry,  
On to the driving seat ! Here's whip and reins !  
Particularly, Jehu, take the flames,  
Thou son of old Apollo ! furiously  
Drive, burn ! So rapid be thy course, and fire  
Ravin so swift behind thee, that the bolt  
May fail to hurl thee from thy seat of doom,  
'Till smoking ash the labouring vortex choke !

EDWIN.

A devil can destroy, a God create.  
A devil claps his hands when hell-fire spreads ;  
But God's heart wearies for the cooling rain  
And life's soft-flowing river to pervade  
The meadows and enrich them with its flowers.

MORDAUNT.

Ho, I pour the philosophic flood,  
That quenches all this heathen Tartarus,  
Transported to your Christian Afterward.

I make a verdant meadow of man's life,  
Without a single hedgerow shutting off  
The broad expanse where pleasure breezes blow !  
The garden 's open, every man may pluck  
The apple of his taste, no frightening voice  
To drive him to the shade, or fruitless task  
Of tailoring with fig-leaves for his cloth.

EDWIN.

So kind and free to let each rob his neighbour !  
Could all men rob and none be robbed, 'twere well  
Perhaps in your esteem. But what the gain  
When he who robs, endures the robbery  
Inflicted by his equal licensed neighbour !

Old tyrants suffered one lawbreaker, each  
Himself, none other licensed in the realm !  
But that may pass : he robs himself who sins.

MORDAUNT.

Say how. Is joy the sole prerogative  
Of goodbodies ? Instance to me a crime,  
'Twas luring joy incited to the deed,—  
The joy of passion slaked from flowing cup,  
The joy of vengeance wreaked on trampled foes !

EDWIN.

Instance a life of happy villainy.  
The roistering laugh, be sure, owns little mirth.  
The felon in his every crime hath slain  
A man to be the owner of his purse ;  
*And starts a fugitive for life, before*

He buys one pleasure with the accursed gold,  
That clogs him with its burden, and that damns  
With clinging proof detective of his guilt.

MORDAUNT.

Ho, sinners distance their pursuers oft :  
And each can rollick ere the hounds are up !

EDWIN.

Well, given a little distance in the chase,  
But lay thine ear a moment to the wind,  
And lo the baying of the sleuthhounds far,  
And faint is heard. Double on the scent and hide.  
What dogs are on thy track ! behold them pass,  
Distended nostrils, quivering lips, and head  
Low down upon the scent,—by scent, not sight !  
The hills may intervene, but every step  
Has left its taint upon the affronted grass,  
That lies low, crushed, and moaning for revenge ;  
Or lifts itself indignant, and proclaims,  
“ He passed this way.”

MORDAUNT.

Aye true ! but many slip  
Into their hole, the grave. And baffled hounds  
Go raging that they have not slaked their tongues,  
Hot with the dusty chase, in gushing blood !  
Till Death, grim farmer of those lands, contemptuous  
Flogs them as trespassers from his domain !  
Tis rest and race again,—but catch no fox.  
Yes, countless villains run before the hounds,



When started from the cover, knowing well  
They can outstrip pursuers, and be earthed,  
A little blown perhaps ;—but unavenged  
The widow's henroosts and the weakling lambs !

EDWIN.

Howe'er you need one thing and wanting that,  
Want all to make your statement waterproof.  
A man must have no other nature than  
A fox, ere he can gain by villainy  
In the sharp run 'tween sin and sepulchre.

Let universal license reign ; forbid  
The law's rough hand to drag from out the vault  
The sweating, trembling, haggard villain's feet,  
And force him pinioned 'neath the dangling noose :  
Forbid that any raise the lash, and whip  
With stinging jibe the oppressor ; or uplift  
For hate and scorn the plunderer of the poor :  
Yet still the unquiet scourge of conscience whirls  
And cracks, and swift descends with shrieking speed,  
And twines round, cutting, hot, with knots of lead  
On cords of wire. No license here protects !  
They crave the mercy of the hangman's art.

MORDAUNT.

Abolish conscience, an uneasy curse  
Of illtrained sentiment !

EDWIN.

No conscience then  
To guard your purse, or save your life from touch

Of highwayman. The new philosopher  
May shoot as wolf the troubler of his peace.  
But who is wolf, and who philosopher,  
Is not yet entered in the statute book.

That too may pass. Yet if deserters true  
Report, the Passions, Vices, man recruits  
To janizary for him, brawl at home  
As wildly, as they rip and slay abroad.

The hunter on the prairie, in the wood,  
Or by the river's marge, his skill and strength  
Matches against the wild beast's cunning, rage  
And appetite,—nourishing the growth of all  
That makes and signalises manly prowess :  
And e'en in war, van-leaders in the charge,  
Breach-storming captains, black with smoke, and red  
With blood, have knelt, woman in heart and hand,  
Beside a wounded foe, and loved sweet peace  
More ardently because of carnage seen.

But all the goodly things of manhood sink  
In the evil ooze, and sweet angelic kinships  
Are lost ; and slimy sorrows crawl and spawn :  
For villains as the heritage of sin  
Have this,—the vice which strikes its torturing fangs  
So deep in others, has its sharpest tooth,  
Its slowest killing, direst paining poison  
Reserved for him, who nurtures them to strike.

MORDAUNT.

I hold retainer fee for neither vice,

Nor so-called sanctity. I hate extremes.  
You 've drawn the picture forcibly for one :  
But see the saint ! what joy has he, poor soul !  
Too high o'er earth for warmth with lower souls ;  
And yet too far from heaven to more than bear  
The burden of its snow-white purity,  
Pointing a pale peak to its wished-for skies !

EDWIN.

Some—God so lofty in their nobleness  
Hath made, the storm that on the plain ne'er shook  
The aspen courage of a feeble heart,  
Wrenched fierced their pinetree steadfastness of hold  
Wrapped round the firm rocks of the mount of God ;—  
The dew, that dropped so gently in the vale,  
Was flake on flake of whirling drifts to them !

And yet tho' never summer sun of joy  
Could draw the verdant bloom across their breast,  
There moved from them no glacier's chilling mass  
Into the warmth and bliss of other lives,  
Bearing their dead hopes, like the climber's corpse—  
Eyes staring stony thro' the limped ice—  
To swell the debris of their ruined past.

Far otherwise, they never chilled, because their  
breasts  
Were covered in the snows of winters gone ;  
But from their woe they sent a quickening rill  
Of love and hope to fructify waste hearts,  
To quench the summer thirst of eager youth,

To gladden homes, and serve the need of man.

MORDAUNT.

More fool they, sir ! I see no good in height,  
Unless it lift to fame ; I'd be Mont Blanc,  
For all the world to come and stare, and turn  
Homeward to talk in every land of me.

But lift a shivering side to storm and cold,  
That I might turn a mill or fill a cup— !

EDWIN.

I had by thousands rather be the hillock  
At the great mountain's base, or ere it sinks  
Into the plain, on which the lambkins butt  
And leap in the fresh air and sun of spring ;  
Where little children, prattling musical,  
Aye changing tones of wonder, joy, surprise,  
Come trooping, eager-eyed, with hot full hands  
O'er-crammed with primroses and buttercups ;  
And sit upon the rocks cushioned with thyme,  
And gather cuckoo-sorrel in the clefts,—  
Remembering after winter's interpose  
The dear old haunts where opening violets grew,  
The bluebell, and the harebell,—where the nest  
Was found last year with wealth of spotted eggs :—  
Ten thousand times I'd rather feel their feet,  
And dower them with my fresh-made miracles  
Of blue and yellow upgrowths, and the bright  
Green grass that curtains round the feathered home,  
Than be the highest peak of Matterhorn,

When panting climber comes, takes breath to shout  
What none can hear ; his empty bottle plants ;  
Looks round again, and palpitating much  
At heart, thinks of the slippery long descent.

In all his after-life the Matterhorn  
Is chiefly great because it was beneath him,  
He higher than the highest in the world.

MORDAUNT.

Ah bah ! the base is base !

EDWIN.

The peak is lone

And cold.

MORDAUNT.

But all the country ringing round,  
North, east, west, south, look up and claim the peak  
Their glory ; choose the best spot, cry, look there !

EDWIN.

Yes, and what whisper of this babbled praise  
Wings upward to the great man's ear. The storm  
Hurtles, the clouds wrap, and the snows descend,  
His eye, his ear, his heart in turmoil all  
For delectation of the country folk,  
Who turn to dine and sleep,— would wake with joy,  
If morning showed him prone, levelled by lightning.  
What gain ! 'Twould overflow the empty mill-dam  
Of gossip, and set the clacking tongues awirl.

MORDAUNT.

Yes, Aristides may be "just" too long ;

And we grow weary of the oft-told tale,  
And give the damnatory shell, "Stand by  
O Aristides ; give the new man place."

EDWIN.

Ah ! such haphazard praise as flows from man  
Is all too swift and rough a stream, on which  
To trust a light barque laden with our toil.

I set my purpose firm to sow a seed,  
And wait a harvest where no sickle gleans  
A scant return.

MORDAUNT.

What promised land, I pray,  
Is this with Eshcol grapes on all its vines.

EDWIN.

His favour, He of Sinai's awful pomp :  
The same, the suffering Man of Calvary,  
Returning Lord to Olive's brow ere long.

MORDAUNT.

What ! what ! Oh gentlemen, a fossil here !  
Transported back to the Palaeozoic age,  
I hear the old world creatures waking up !  
A Christ, a God ! 'Tis æons since my faith !

OSCAR (*aside*).

. I said, a craze brand-new since yesterday !

MORDAUNT (*continuing*).

I hold the dignity of human kind.  
The thing I see, the power I feel, that only  
My homage has. Why should I bend the knee

To something curtained in the vapoury clouds,  
That speaks no word, and does no act : while law  
With traceable, unswerving energy  
Dominates the world ?

What need the peeping eye,  
The key-hole listener's ear, when we have passed  
From schooldays to the liberty of men ?

Pluck flowers, eat fruits of the alluring Now :  
Act as the passion dictates. "Wrong," you cry,  
Your cry, is wrong, I answer. For we act  
As men by impulse of Humanity.  
And let no god intrusive come to say  
"Thou shalt not ;" much less ventriloquial priest  
With voice fictitious sounding from the sky !

EDWIN.

Ah truly, tho' not sages, yet we know  
Full surely, who would think the staring sun  
A most exasperating, unendurable  
Intrusion in this world's economy,  
But that he shines that some may sweat and get,—  
Then seasonably retires, that other some  
May creep and steal, or sudden strike and kill  
And rob. We know a name for such, we do !

MORDAUNT.

Oh what uncharity ! Not robbers we,  
But robbed ! robbed of our best and only guerdon,  
The trust and followance of mankind to truth.

EDWIN.

*To truth that makes a lie of all their truths !*

In trust, that shakes the ground of all their faith !

MORDAUNT.

Still more uncharity ! No calm, clear gaze  
Settles on the deep problems of our life  
With achromatic mind to dissipate  
The coloured halo, and to see and say  
In unimpassioned language, what he sees ;  
But men of grosser vision straightway cry,  
“ Out on him. Lo, he sees no blue.” This one,  
“ Nay, it is my yellow that he cannot see,  
My yellow, that in perfect circle rounds  
The whole.” “ Nay, nay,” this other cries, “ It is ”—  
And so the abject herd, dissident all  
Each from the other, save in this alone,  
To excommunicate with bell and book  
And candle him who sees in light of day.

EDWIN.

Aye, aye, who sees to find the jewels out,  
And with still growing zeal destroys all such  
As he not values ; and transfers the rest  
From the too childish care of common men  
And women to the philosophic bank !

MORDAUNT.

We put the creeds of men to test and find  
Paste diamonds treasured up, the which destroyed  
Should win us thanks ; and precious stones from mines  
Of truth deep delved, we liberally present.

EDWIN.

*Ah, that is charity commendable !*



And I admire disinterestedness  
Of such prevailing character, as makes  
These scrutinisers try their alchemy  
All at their neighbour's risk. They calmly take  
The diamond star of my ancestral ring,  
The precious heirloom for the firstborn's hand,  
And drop it in the crucible to test  
Their plan infallible for making gems!

MORDAUNT.

But you'll admit, religion in the world  
Can never match in power philosophy.  
Religion is in the clouds, a baseless fabric;  
Philosophy is science-centred in the earth.

EDWIN.

Ha! from her clouds there leaps the electric flash  
That shatters turret top, and tower, and basement,  
And rock foundation of your edifice!

MORDAUNT.

Sir, sir, you've but idea; we have fact!

EDWIN.

Well, grant ours be ideal, earth has nought  
In all her substance so substantial. Grant  
That it be real,—for the argument  
Allow it,—loss immensurate it were  
To barter it for your philosophy.

MORDAUNT.

Oh, I grant the idea good for womankind,  
*For all humanity in nonage, for—*

The phrase forgive—for all old-women men !

But for the aristocracy of mind,  
For the great hierarchs in nature's fane,  
Men, men I say of grand intelligence,  
Who, awed but not dismayed, have gone within  
The portals where the seven-branched candlestick  
Of Science dissipates the gloom, that broods  
Beneath the triple curtains of our life ;  
And heard the oracular response, that breathes  
Forth in the inner sanctuary of soul ;  
Nor framed the story of an abstract god,  
The graven image, the extern idol thought  
Of what they feel and know and think within,—  
As grosser natures make of brass or stone  
The fashion of the thing they see without,  
A man, a beast, a serpent, or a bird,—  
But these, these priests of intellect and soul,  
Find not a god, but each one is a god,  
Himself the worshipper, himself the god.

EDWIN.

All hail, thou god ! Perhaps it may be hoped  
By one, who would not fail in reverence,  
That incense sweet, and all of service due  
By such a worshipper to such a god  
Is given ; and that the Deity bestows  
His richest favours on his worshipper !

MORDAUNT.

Your jesting sounds like sword-points on chain armour ;

Makes noise but hurts not. Unbelievers we  
 In your opinion. There mistaken, sir.  
 The age is one of faith, but faith that grasps.

Upon the dead man's open palm you pour  
 Bushels of incohesive sand ungrasped :  
 Quickened it to a soldier's roused from sleep,  
 And instant slips away the worthless heap  
 \* To let his fingers strain upon the hilt.  
 The old creeds are pulverised by age : the new  
 Faith is a brand as pliable as steel.

EDWIN.

You sing a bad song well.

You give the praise  
 Which all new fashions boast, to swell the silk,  
 That sways above the fragile wicker work,  
 Your dangerous chariot to the skies.

It is

An age of faith in unbelief of all,  
 That asks for credence, not credulity.

And yet an age most nice in unbelief.  
 The dishes must be daintily served up :  
 Throw me no half-cooked, rancid joints,—whole hogs  
 With smell of last-gorged offal ; no roast ox  
 Complete, with eye-balls staring, teeth uncovered  
 By the dried lip ; and sweating, drunken cooks  
 With spits and spigots,—such as was Tom Paine,  
 Rousseau, or e'en the once high-priest Voltaire.  
*Must be* French dishes of another kind.

Hire me the polished Renan. Let him write  
In glowing periods of the man, the Jew  
Of Nazareth ; and with nice discerning touch  
Remove the fabulous moss that grew around,  
Nor harm the bark or buds of that sweet vine !

An age most tolerant,—it softly laughs  
At Bonner, the impetuous man, to dance  
Because a heretic was burning :—and the rout,  
That smashed the saints' heads in the window panes  
To let the white light in, were surely mad ;  
Each colour in the rainbow from the sun's  
All-comprehensive radiance is evolved  
Prismatically, and straightway returns  
To simple daylight ; all the creeds forsooth  
Diverge but by the prisms of many minds,  
Red, blue, or yellow,—Papist, Protestant,  
Idolator, Mahometan, or Jew !  
What matters it ! all worship !

MORDAUNT.

Worship what ?

The unwise ask ! The uncivilised bow down  
Before an idol ! Well, and the civilised  
To an ideal. 'Tis not so gross, admit.

But rising higher, we find Humanity,  
Not narrowed into some specific shape,  
Nor lost in all-pervading generalities,  
But comprehended in the single mind,  
While reaching to the limits of the race.

Humanitarianism must draw all souls ;  
'Tis the great god and gospel of the age !

EDWIN.

A gospel and a deity forsooth  
To give but little gladness, and to win  
Not much of worship ! There are souls who look  
Within their breasts, and find, alas, too much,  
That ill befits the home of deity.

And all that look without upon the world  
Must see the ulcerous extremities  
Of this your deity protruding forth.

What now, in every man this godhead is,  
To every man this godhead great extends ;  
Myself a god, and in my deity  
I must include, essential part of it,  
Her whom I saw and blushed, where gas-lamps flared,  
Defile her womanhood with painted cheeks  
And gaudiness of shame-pronouncing garb,—  
One whom beside the woman's hand I'd touch  
Were leprosy ; yet of my deity  
A part ! The man with blood upon his soul ;  
The men who lie and steal, defame, débauch,  
Whome'er they can, and bestialise themselves,  
These deities, and deity diffused !—  
God in the parts, and every part a god !

Commend me to a Moloch, bloody king,  
Or Juggernaut ; or grant me better still,  
And down to lowing Apis, pure white bull,  
*I'll bend my knee !*

MORDAUNT.

What, sir! you must forget  
The race is one. You cannot break the bond  
'Tween you and humankind,—however gross—

EDWIN.

The race is one. But I am one, and stand  
Alone to shake the dust from off my feet  
Of all this cancerous community,  
And keep my garments from infectious touch.

MORDAUNT.

You spur too much. Like young recruits, you waste  
The flash and lead on foemen out of reach.

There is no need for such o'erhasty word,  
Disowning kindred with the race, not clean  
As yet. For in the progress of the age  
'Twill grow to whiteness, like the Alpine peak  
Consorting but with snow, whose swinish base  
Lies low, and welters in the oozy swamp.

EDWIN.

And what to me of gospel is in this!  
Be thou in mire: lift others to the snow!

The swamp's black ooze, and heaven's pure snow  
are more

Than distance-parted. Not insensate, I  
Must loathe my spiritual uncleanness,  
And feel, the more I long for purity,  
The fiery furnace with intensest heat  
Burn, looking up the impassable height

Which severs from the Lazarus above  
Pillowed upon the breast of Abraham,—  
Me severs, since too early in the age  
I came, but to uplift him to his peace !

MORDAUNT (*going out*).

This man too sturdy is for God and Christ !  
I'll find or make a chance to test his creed,  
And learn him that a man with dagger near  
Can harm him more than skiey thundering God ;  
And human hands, that clasp the drowning hair  
Can give a better ransom than a Christ  
Who looks with sad eyes from the nailed cross !

---

## II.

*Jilted.*SCENE.—*A Country House.*EDWIN (*with a letter, he reads.*)

“ My feelings are no more of love to thee.  
It grieves thy heart? I then do grieve to give  
Thee sorrow. Yet less bitter 'tis to know  
Our fate and meet it; than with lingering hopes  
Grow more enamoured of the forfeit life.

'Twas thoughtless youth and kind proximity  
Misled our hearts. Distance and time have shown  
Us both our error? Sense of honour caused  
My closely clinging to a plighted word :  
But I am taught the Vow incarnated  
The spirit Love, which gone—a corpse remains,  
And I must find a sepulchre wherein  
To hide the offensive plight, dead and corrupt.

Long since to you true estimate has come  
In sober absence, and you write me small  
In stature,—not the godlike eminence



I bore in those enchanted days,—so good.”

Oh ! mercy ! oh thou pen of spite erase  
Those words of bitterest cruelty. “ No more ”—  
She never wrote it ; ’tis some hell-born mist  
That so distorts my vision. Let me read  
It o’er again,—

“ No more of love to thee.”

Out, out ye burning brands ; make not a hearth  
Of my poor breast, whereon to kindle such  
Juniper coals !

I’ll quench your heat ! I’ll stop  
Your glowing ! from this casket’s well I draw  
The once o’erbrimming waters of her love.

Look how many letters written by her hand—  
Letters more prized than gold,—than gold ? mere dross  
The gold or silver, which a beggar’s tongue  
Could make him master of.

But those my treasures, gloated o’er and loved ;  
Companions true, consoling, never-changing :  
Sure title-deeds to royal heritage :  
Flowers, sweetest flowers, that when a sun had set  
Shed forth their twilight perfume for my heart :  
My letters will you hear, whose every word  
Uncaged a joy, that shook its wings of love  
And carolled blithely as it clomb the sky.

Should I then cast aside my true old friends  
*At bidding of one vile and slanderous tongue,*

That says she loved me not !

Are they not full—

Page echoes on to echoing page the old,  
Old story of her love !

And they are false !

This last, this dagger-worded letter true !

. . . . .

Oh sad forebodings, were ye true indeed !  
Ye stormy petrels which the mariners' curse !  
Poor idle curse, drowned in the wrecking waves !

Oh, pallid fears, that fled before the van  
Of hurried marching woe, and clamoured loud  
For entrance at the gates,—the mocking walls,  
That threw the playful jests, and bid you go  
And sit beneath the vine, those walls lie low,  
And all the guarded homes are tenantless.

. . . . .

Oh, let me leave this hateful room ! out, out,  
Out to the air !

What rest or out or in ?

Out to the air ! was she not here with me.  
Along this walk starlighted we have strayed.

I think it o'er—she could not leave me—no !  
No ! why should she withdraw the sunny ray,  
The warm life-giving beam ? Aye, now 'tis night ;  
But hope, sweet hope, shine on amid the clouds :  
Shed down thy lunar light, whisper to me,  
“ Thy sun is set. Wait like the darkened earth,

And that same sun shall bring the dawn again."

Was she not here with me? Have I not hung,  
As thankful pilgrims do at holy well,  
Shreds from the garments of the olden days  
On every branch that droops above this path?

Here, here upon this very spot we stood,  
When these same boughs were dandling in their arms  
Their last year's babes. 'Twas evening, sweet and calm,  
The birds low twittered as they found their roosts;  
The insinuating dew had lured abroad  
The coy perfume from rose and woodbine cells;  
The half-veiled moon looked shyly o'er the hilltop,  
And tender tints stole in and out on high;  
And like a happy-hearted maiden, tripped the stream  
From bank to bank, and sang a low, glad song.

We were as king and queen, who progress made,  
And all things ministered to us from earth  
And spiritual sky. I crowned her queen, my queen,  
And queen of all I felt and knew, and saw.  
And can her heart so lightly now dissolve  
The coronation oath she swore that eve?

. . . . .

(*A week afterwards, EDWIN with another letter.*)

"Your words of fondness sound more bitter than  
Upbraidings!"

Then I'll write no more of love!  
So cease the flowings of a mother's breast,

When little lips are cold, which should have oped;  
Its sluices !

Oh ! my love ! my pretty nursling,  
Cherished in my bosom, tended tenderly,  
Dead in my arms !

Murdered !

Shall I then pray,  
Thy memory should hound her thro' the world ;  
And that when couched in forest deep of joy,  
Still might the distant baying strike her ear  
Until like frightened deer she bounded up,  
And burst across the barren, wind-swept moor,—  
Behind Remorse, that hunter keen and strong,  
A quivered Dian, swift as driving clouds,  
Her sharp, barbed arrows at her back,  
And her fleet staghounds, eager for the chase !

Murdered !

Bring forth the murderer. Who comes ?  
The woman whom I loved, the fair, sweet face,  
The gentle manner, and the winning smile !

An unjust judge forsooth ! I bid them loose  
Her bonds, and lead her gently down to lave  
In lustral font, and go unspotted forth.

Forgiven, only this I ask, that Hate  
Shall not usurp the seat of love unthroned.

'Twere pain to think the Love that walked supreme

Within his gorgeous palace, should be thrown  
In naked death for snarling dogs to maul.  
It lived a king. Oh, bury it as a king !  
If not with pomp of death and wailing voice  
That sobs and breaks along the crape-hung street ;  
At least with honouring silence let, ah, let  
Some weeping-willowed valley of his land  
Open its stern-hushed breast of woe for him,—  
The crown upon his cold and marble brow,  
The broken sceptre in the death-closed hand ;  
And there at eventide let memory come  
To weep unshamed one tear o'er him who died !

And what for me ? I have my dead, my slain—  
Unrighteously against my passionate pleading !  
I can but do what desolate Rizpah did,  
Spread me the sackcloth on the bare, cold rock ;  
And watch both day and night beside my dead !  
And when, like wheeling vultures, bitter thoughts  
Come soaring round and round, intent to light  
And gorge and batten on her treachery,  
To rise and drive them off with gesture fierce ;  
Then sit me down to my lone watch again !

For me—?

The world will weep with Rizpah, tell  
Her story, picture her distress to wake  
From some enrapturing dream in which she held  
*Her loved ones round the happy hearth at home,—*

To wake, startled by night-bird's dismal whoop,  
And in the waning moonlight, on the gibbet  
To see them reaching out their wind-tossed arms  
In hideous mockery of their mother's woe !

No more of sleep ! no more of dreams, so sweet  
To slumber, but to waking cruel as  
The hook-beaked vulture ! Yet the vigil hours,  
While slow the chilly morning broke, to watch  
Their gaunt forms loom against the murky sky,  
Swaying and twisting on the accursed tree !

Aye, weep, oh, world ! with desolate Rizpah weep.  
But turn aside, a little moment turn,  
And see this sorrow given unto me.

Oh, sorrowful, whose fate comes nighest mine,  
When roused at night, cheek-paling messages  
Bear you with anguished spirit to the couch,  
Where lies, hard at death's door, your promised bride  
The whitest fear, that wolf-like dogged your way,  
Shrinks from the lion glare of eye-seen woe !  
Yes, there she lies, the beautiful, the pure ;  
And in her eye there gleams a brighter light,  
And o'er her cheek a deeper flush is thrown,  
Than warmest rapture of long-hoarded love  
E'er summoned up to greet thy slow return :  
But yet 'tis not for thee,—she knows thee not ;  
No glow of pleasure at thy presence adds  
Another lustre to the kindled eye ;

And her impassive fingers answer not  
As in the bygone days, thy loving touch.

Ah, turn away, and hide the rising tear,  
That trembles on the quivering lid, and fears  
To dew the manly cheek ! Hush thy deep sobs !

Yet why ? She heeds thee not !

Listen, she speaks !

What are her sayings ? Never didst thou think,  
When listening to the tuneful flow, that gushed  
From the full fountain of her love, and steeped  
Thy soul in ecstasy, the day would come  
When that same stream would poison all thy life.  
Her words are not of thee. She's wandering  
Thro' far-off days of childhood with the mates,  
Who crowned her head with flowers in the long  
Long summer days, but died ere flowers were gone.

Watch by her side, the live-long, haggard night ;  
At dawn the golden bowl will broken lie.

Weep, mourner, weep. But let me come and soothe  
Thy grief by showing mine. My night so black  
Will make thee prize thy starlight. Deserts mine,  
Burned to the rock, will make the green leaves left  
By caterpillar and by palmerworm  
Fairer than all the blooms of paradise !

Come, let me see her face. 'Tis beautiful :  
And so was mine. Thou lovedst her : I too loved.  
Thou must encoffin all so fair, so loved ;  
*Follow her sable bier ; hear the dull clod*

Falling with muffled sound above thy bride.  
But yet while folding o'er the pulseless breast  
Her clay-cold fingers, this remains—thou didst it :  
Thine was the last, last touch upon her hand :  
Thine the last kiss that sealed her frigid lips.

She whom I love, still lives : her love has died.  
Those eyes, those beauteous eyes, whose sunny glancings  
Had power to make the pulsings of my heart  
Bound like frisk lambkins on a summer knoll,—  
Their wintry stare would send in frozen tide  
My blood slow curdling backward to my heart !

Ah, my bright sun ! Ah, her life-gladdening smiles !  
Oh, darkness of the grave, would it were come !

Like Saul upon Gilboa's mount I feel  
The life whole in me ; and the uncircumcised  
Are trooping round ! Oh, for a hand to launch  
The mortal spear, or draw the thirsty sword !

I would be glad to die. I shall not see  
Her face again. Better it is to die,  
When life has lost its charm.

They say 'tis weak  
To die thro' fear of pain ; and yet 'tis brave  
To die in spite of pain. I will not bate  
A jot of all the horrors of this death,—  
Will look it in the face with open eye,—  
Will let it ravel all the outer edge  
Of the garment of the flesh, before it rends  
*The whole ; if it by pain blot out this pain !*



## III.

**Consolations.**SCENE.—*Trinity College.*

EDWIN.

THERE'S not a joy in earth, whose deepest source  
Has not been poisoned by this flood of woe !

Once how I loved to watch the varied year,  
From the first decking of its youthful brow  
With snowdrop and with primroses, to days  
When it had lost its autumn-gloried crown,  
And fallen asleep wrapped in its snowy shroud.

But now as well the sprightly song of larks,  
That spur the dallying morn in the gay spring,  
As plaintive requiem sung by redbreast lone  
On leafless bough in dull October days,  
Moves the sad longing of my soul to tears.

I writ her name abroad on everything ;  
To all sweet sounds I harmonised her voice ;  
I linked her presence with me everywhere ;  
Sight, sound, and thought are now accursed to me !

OSCAR.

*What premonition of disaster came ?*

EDWIN.

I never dreamt of grief. But after wisdom  
Shrilled in my ear the numbered items, signs,  
Marks, tokens overlooked. I only felt  
A chill, and longed for summer warmth again.  
I only thought the table frugally supplied,  
And wished for sumptuous banquet as of yore.  
Why wrote she not so frequent? not complaint,—  
But hunger craved; and patience sat to take  
The lessening morsels.

Then a letter came,  
The chidings for its slowness hushed themselves  
In glad anticipation.

Break the seal.

A thousand fluttering joys wing down to feed  
Upon the welcome hoard!

But ah for me,  
With one fell swoop a kite on lightning wing  
Flashed thro' the crowd and left my pretty birds  
All scattered, bleeding, dead!

OSCAR.

What likeness hers?

EDWIN.

Thinking on her, I know not right and wrong  
Betimes. Opining this is fair, I dread  
Lest it be foul, since I have thought it good.

I cannot tell you what she's like. I thought  
Her faithful,—could have sworn her true as steel

Would in hot blood have challenged to the test  
Of wrathful sword remotest hint of blemish.

Now she is false—to me, to me I mean.  
I cannot tell you what she's like, I cannot ;  
Only what I thought. I thought her beautiful.

OSCAR.

The mine gives marble, and we carve an angel ;  
Our fancy turns a sculptor too, and forms  
A bust from out some common block for us.  
Yours did so ; cease to grieve.

EDWIN.

You comfort so ;  
One writes to say, he saw her in Pall Mall,  
So gracious to a chinking man of trade,  
Who coined his gold from pots, and pans, and tins.  
Another, with a loose, rich reprobate,  
Growing his lip-hairs, but o'ergrown in sin,  
Beheld her at the dance, when wine was free !

Oh gracious grass, that covers o'er from sight  
The graveyard changes in our loved and lost,  
And gives the pure white daisy to our eyes,  
Or tender violet with its low-hung head,  
Helping us see their new sweet life above !

And yet these come to comfort me forsooth,  
Protruding this corruption, and with zeal  
Of showman's finger and descriptive tongue  
Telling me her sin !

OSCAR.

Better see and know,

Than dream. 'Tis bitter waking !

EDWIN.

Will the dream  
Not gently pass away with morning light ?  
There may be death in the rude shout, that starts  
The smocked somnambulist.

OSCAR.

Sleep on unwaked,  
If sleep be peaceful. But when terror stands  
To hurl me down the dreadful precipice ;  
Then swamp me in the billowy fires ; then change  
The fiery tongues to beasts with flashing eyes  
And gnashing teeth,—I'd sooner wake me up,  
And face the night, however dark and wild,  
And force it give some real horror ; than  
Be sport to phantom cataclasms that shift  
Swifter than scud of tempest-shattered clouds  
Across the shuddering moon.

EDWIN.

I am adrift,  
A broken cloud that cannot fold itself  
To rest in the calm fields of sunlit heaven,  
Or droop upon the sheltering slope of hills ;  
I only drift a black thing o'er her shining bliss.

OSCAR.

'Tis pity, friend, but loss is common. Grief  
Like the Bedouin horde sweeps down, whene'er the  
crops

Are gathered on the plain, and beeves are fat.

EDWIN.

But not to me. I knew nor loss nor grief.  
I thought that all might grieve, and pitied them ;  
But held myself indemnified 'gainst pain.

OSCAR.

Then I would hold the bond, and sue dame Fate  
To take her bailiffs from my outraged heart.

EDWIN.

How, how ?

OSCAR.

Faint heart ne'er kept the citadel,  
Which a faint heart had never won ; assert  
Your title.

EDWIN.

How, I piteous ask. Is it thus ?  
Like one who rises from the sheeted dead,  
And sees the murderer feasted in his home,  
And hears the laugh and song and merriment,  
Which once were his : should he from charnel-house  
Breathe sickening odours on the perfumed room,  
Throw a blue light's weird pallor on the cheeks,  
And thrust his horrid visage on the eye,—  
Then turn again, because the cock's shrill call  
Were not by half so potent summoning  
Back to the grave, as the clear dread disgust  
Which bade him go !

Better lie still and feel

The slowly burrowing worm !

OSCAR.

Dyspeptic fears !

Sepulchral glooms are not for her, I judge.

At worst she can but dazzle you with light

Of her new day.

EDWIN.

I dare not on her presence.

I dare not,—all thro' life to bear the print

On my mind's eye of her averted look.

You gaze with overbold inspection on

The sun, and wheresoe'er you turn your eye,

A black orb floats before it, making blot

The blackest on the whitest ground in sight.

My sun can radiate but blackness now.

OSCAR.

I try once more. Attack the treacherous foe,

Who by unguarded gate has crept within,

And turned the bolt.

EDWIN.

Aye, let me meet him once

Alone ! But now he's circled round by her !

I cannot smite him, else I lacerate her.

What can I then ? I'd follow her thro' snows,

Or furnace fire, if all the pain were mine,

And humbly gladly do her will in all :

Not as the broken-hearted night pursues

The sweet-faced day, that flies with all the crowd

Of golden ringlets dancing round her neck,—  
Then only sad, when e'er her jilted lover comes  
Too near her flight.

OSCAR.

The serpent's glamour draws  
The fluttering bird. Shake off the creeping charm;  
Or else drop down a heap of nerveless feathers  
Into the jaws, toothed with the poison fangs!

The sympathy of many friends is sure  
To salve this burning wound of passionate grief.

EDWIN.

Sympathy! Oh yes, sympathy, how good!  
We'll order straight a hearse and horses six,  
With sable hides, long tails, and nodding plumes!  
A funeral! Accept the notice, friends.  
Here walk the mutes. Sad? Grinning, unvoiced jokes  
At each acquaintance in the careless streets.

OSCAR.

Let the robed hireling keep a merry heart.  
You have the sable circumstance of woe;  
*That* money buys. 'Tis other currency,  
That rules where genuine grief is.

EDWIN.

Well, he smiles;  
He wears your funeral scarf,—then makes a shirt o't;  
And paid he buys a bonnet for his wife.

All softly too,—there are the carriages  
*In long line*, filled with sympathising friends.

They really say, "Poor fellow! who'd have thought!  
What, heard you, has he left? so little! Ha!"

And then untroubled turn to market price  
Of mutton : recapitulate the last  
"Good thing," the raciest scandal that has graced  
The high-spiced dishes at the social board.  
While dumb below the hideous pomp of death  
Is borne the corpse dust to its fellow-dust!

Small wonder that a "mourner" inly vows,  
With shame self-stricken, "all bought grief, false show,  
I bid dishonour not my confined heart."

I've heard of griefs and blighted lives, and well  
Remember how I dealt the liberal words,  
Condoling,—and remembering, ask none such!

OSCAR.

Ah, 'tis the glooming fog distorts your vision.  
The lapse of time shall sweep it for clear sight.

EDWIN.

My grief is shame to me, laughter to the world!  
Had I the loss of brother, sister dear,  
Or parents' venerated life to mourn,  
How bravely might I wear in sight of all  
My sorrow : challenge each with plaintive word  
To do their homage to it ; let it droop  
My eye, and pale my cheek, and soften low  
The motions of my tongue : thus honour win,  
"How loved, and loving!"

But behold my pain.



It is a fire ; I cannot quench it ; no,  
It must burn, burn ; but inly burn it must,—  
A heat terrific, scorching all within :  
But no betraying sound, or tell-tale flash.

Lost her, my bride unwedded, wife unused !  
But soft, did the world hear you whisper aught ?  
Aye, then a smothered laugh, and whispered word,  
“ Ha, somewhat pale, take pity on him, Loo !  
Looks sad, poor man ! ”

Go wreathe thy cheek with smiles

Ask the warm wind and bronzing sun to tan  
Thy brow, and make a dark skin shield thee from  
Their savage jibes. What, man, the spear point lies  
Embedded 'neath the corselet. 'Midst thy foes  
Wilt thou unharness, fool, to pluck it out ?  
Thy love is dead ; but on no sable bier  
Extended, canst thou follow with thy tears ?  
Buried ? Aye, buried from thy sight and touch ;  
But yet thou hast no honourable grave  
Whereon to cast thy weary heart and head,  
And utter moan in dim, dew-dropping eves.

Go speak thy jest, or borrow one to serve ;  
With lighter air speed humming to thy task ;  
Use whip and spur, heed not the galled flank ;  
Thou hast no right for common, open grief :  
For this mad world of ours will rather smile  
With her who wrongs and laughs, than stop to weep  
*With him* who halts upon his injured limb !

OSCAR.

Now come. Whate'er your loss, 'tis reparable.  
'Tis only chance of circumstance, or else  
It had been Mary when it was Lucinda.

The hop-plant winds its shoots around a pole,  
Until the harvest knife has severed love ;  
But in the springtime tendrils clasp and grace  
Another pole with equal tenderness.

A callous thing it seems perhaps to speak  
Thus lightly of the object of your love ;  
But wisely note, that women all are all  
Alike just women,—nothing more nor less ;  
Like as weeds to weeds, or coin to coin, or day  
To day. One bad one found ; this good one take.  
Upon the counter ring the coin. False ? Nail it.  
Pluck up the weed, and shy it o'er the hedge.  
Let the day die ; lay head on pillow ; sleep,  
Until the new dawn fills the laughing sky.

EDWIN.

No difference say you, but in name ; No more ?  
You drive me mad ! Pluck up the weed, you say !  
How dare you, sir, the roots, or weed or flower,  
Were netted in the tissues of my being !

Drive needles into the quick of the soul !—  
Pour red hot sand on the apple of the eye,—  
With all the Pope's hell-taught inquisitor's  
Most exquisite skill to save the finest feeling  
Of the finest nerve for longest, keenest torture,—

Then say, "Pluck up" and know what means the word!  
Nail it,—this coin, this rap to the counter-board!

Nail my right hand to my heart. Here nail and  
hammer!

From the coarse, vulgar suffering you shrink.

I'll change it lightly for this sneered-at pain:

Does matter feel? Kick the stone there. What's  
flesh

But senseless like the stone. 'Tis the soul feels  
'Thro' flesh, as the gloved hand will feel the fire;  
Unglove it, let the glowing cinder touch  
The finger. Ha! a start's permissible!  
But my uncovered soul must scorch and smile,  
And look serene on this red coal of loss!

OSCAR.

'Tis what we deprecate. You run and fetch  
The fuel for the fire, and heap it high,  
Remembering the words and acts and scenes.  
You labour with the bellows of your sighs  
To blow the tinder. Like the old-wife cook,  
You shut the sun out, lest he'd spoil the blaze!  
Come, heave off, heave away this load of woe.

EDWIN.

Well, I say "Come" as easily as you:  
But neither I nor you can make the "Come."  
I set myself a mark for all my scorn,  
Reproach, abuse. No dummy ever felt  
*Blows* planted truer on the eye and nose

To make a mummy of the antagonist  
Who 'd be its living representative,  
Than I have struck at this my vengeful grief.  
The dummy leers and ogles undisturbed :  
'Twas made for being hit. And as effectual  
My argumentative and reasoning blows  
Delivered on my weakness. There it is !

I loved her. Oh my love was strong at birth,  
And grew in lusty strength. It will not die  
An easy death.

I have spoken softly,  
And reasoned, " Death must come, or soon or late,  
Sudden or slow. The sentence has gone forth,  
Why discompose the limbs with struggles fierce ;  
Or weaken courage with a suppliant's tears,  
That win no kinder doom ?"

It listens, yields  
A moment. Then it rises with a wild,  
And passionate clamouring for life. It storms,  
And rails, and calls me coward : will not the swallow  
Dare to unequal fight the famished hawk  
To save its nestling from the cruel beak ?  
Will not the tawny tyrant of the woods,  
Who daily bathes her lips in streams of gore,  
Spread her broad breast before the hunter's shot,  
And shield her cumbrous cub ?

Go plead with her.

Look her in the face. Let her speak her words,  
You listening—not indite them on the cold  
Unfeeling page. Give your tongue loose rein ; speak  
Large ; fill her ear with words of great import ;  
Abjure thy wont, to let the copious deed  
Outweigh the scrupulous word in the other scale ;  
Extol her beauty ; praise her honour ; hold  
Her by the plighted word ; paint the bright scenes  
On shifting canvass of the life to be.  
She may relent and love thee once again.

Alas the thought wakes hope, and sounds its doom.  
As the dawn bears to wakening prisoner  
New day, and boding sound of workman's hammer,  
The quickened beating of my feverish heart  
Hastens to raise the scaffold of my hope,  
Roused from its lethargy.

Oh it were better,  
It were better far to die at once, O Love,  
Than thus to suffer death a thousand times,—  
Led up the shaking stair, supported o'er  
The fatal drop, snatched back in cruel pity,  
And left to shudder into nightmare life  
In the cold cell, death's horrors brooding round !

And then I think, would I not rush to fire,  
Or flood, or dagger's thrust, or bullet's stroke ;  
*Hazard* the tropic sun ; endure the frost

Arctic or antarctic ; be a slave at desk  
In the old world, or lead the savage life  
Where the new world unclasps its purse of gold,  
At her sole instance, claiming love so pure  
It asked no recompense save from itself.

Let Love depart a sturdy pioneer,  
Nor say farewell, nor drop a weakling tear ;  
And in the outskirts of her life hew down  
The forests, slay the wild beasts, raise the crops ;  
And write no *Mayflower* story of its lot  
To twinge her conscience.

Lo, I say I will,  
Nor tarry for a moment in her sight,  
Unwelcome.

But there creeps the subtle thought,  
“ No sooner gone, than the old Love asserts  
Its right, and drives the upstart from its seat !  
Go not too far. Swift shall be thy recall.”

Then roars the reflux tide with lifted waves,  
“ Why thus be fooled ! despise who thee despised !  
If she so roughly hustled out of door  
The once much-favoured guest, walk forth erect  
As having food and keep at thine own charge  
And honour,—not mere beggar’s alms from her.”

I will. I man my spirit for the fight,  
“ Back to the kennel, Love, thou whining cur,  
Nor with thy baying to the palefaced moon

Break the calm night of my returning peace ! ”

Yes, yes, so will I live forgetting her.

From this time forth all thought of her is exiled

On direst penalties from all my heart !

And so I live—a month ? day ? . . . . not an hour !

The fond old Love returns. It throws her arm

Around my neck. It presses fancied lip to lip !

Let me forego my manhood ; let me weep !

Rather than reign an undisputed king

O'er countless joys, I 'll go with thee my Love,

Poor banished Love, and lodge upon the cold,

Bare ground ;—and starve upon our memories,

Rather than sit and feast at new-spread boards !

. . . . .

MORDAUNT (*going up to the rooms*).

Now where 's his God omnipotent ? poor fool !

Omniscient, merciful, and good ; and good

From ill extracting ; blessing always all

His trustful sheep even by the wolfish fangs !

This silly sheep has been washed pale by grief ;

And in the pastures green looks somewhat lean !

He mocked me as a god ; and yet I hold

His fate ;—can give him joy, or leave him woe,

Just as it seems to sovereign will or whim !

My Joveline whisper gathered all these clouds :

The same can give the signal to disperse.

Unless obdurate he, I simply tell

This jilting maid, 'twas all a passing joke  
Which hid the jealous leaven in her heart !

*(He knocks.)*

OSCAR.

A visitor ! there Mordaunt calls ! what brings  
His most unwelcome foot ?

EDWIN.

The man has watched  
My movements ; tried to gain access ; denied,  
He stole upon my solitary steps ;  
And with a meaning look obtruded speech.

He has had talk with Clara : when, how unknown.  
I'd rather bear the rack ; yet still admit  
The busy idler, ere he break the oak.

MORDAUNT (*entering*).

Ah, you ! I saw you coming here. I said,  
Now favours fate. Go reconcile to h's lot  
That dismal soul.

EDWIN.

Sir, thanks. A thousand more  
To greet your pause upon the threshold there,  
Than any entrance with unsought advice  
Can win you.

MORDAUNT.

Yes, I know. But 'tis my place.  
I knew untoward things had hemmed you round,



And fond opinions roughly broached to me  
Would cruel block the way, and bar escape.

EDWIN.

I wrapped my mantle o'er these bleeding wounds,  
Incurable ; and and let my life-blood flow  
In darkness. 'Twas this friend, who overcame  
And drew aside the robe and strove to staunch.  
A stranger's touch, tho' kind, makes raw flesh wince !

MORDAUNT.

Abjure old thoughts. Acknowledge life is best  
For those who treat it best, and pluck the flower  
That blooms in reach, nor mourn the faded bud.  
Curse God and die. Or be a man,—a man  
Too proud to feel, or proud to kneel, when thus  
A woman flouts us.

EDWIN.

A man to feel and bear !  
'Tis the brute cares not, when a comrade goes  
To slaughter, and the stall is empty found.

MORDAUNT.

Well, come and hold carouse with spirits choice,  
Whose ignorance of all your past will prove  
A shield to retrospection : and their wit,  
And gaiety, and jocund feasts, and wine  
Will banish care and grief.

EDWIN.

By making worse !  
*Such curing grief uproots it, and implants :—*

Ousts the old tenants, and gives sod and key  
To new, who sow the land with thorns and thistles,  
That scatter seeds for many a groaning year.

MORDAUNT.

You speak of riotous courses. I, good sir,  
Of such as prudery o'erlooks in youth.

EDWIN.

I've seen how oft the Devil horses us  
Upon some well-trained sin, which at the first  
Paces with gentle ambling o'er smooth ways,  
Its docile neck obedient to the rein:  
Till sudden seizing in its iron teeth  
The bit, it dashes ever with swifter speed  
Down the steep stony course, that ends abrupt  
In the sheer precipice of ruined life.

MORDAUNT.

'Tis true; and I applaud the high resolve  
That bars sweet danger. But when nature calls  
For help to cross a sudden yawning chasm,  
A dizzy, swaying rope-bridge serves the end  
For him, who thankful leaps to solid ground  
Safe reached on other side.

EDWIN.

I thank you, sir.  
The yawning chasm may be of other kind,  
And sorrow be my God-appointed bridge.

MORDAUNT.

A god, who gives me sorrow, I avoid.

EDWIN.

Avoid the doctor, who a physic gives :  
A surgeon, who his lancet brings in hand :  
The teacher, who will show you alphabets :  
The captain, who will lead you to the fight !

MORDAUNT.

Aye, aye, I do abjure them all with zeal !

EDWIN.

And only take a stab from brutal lusts :  
And only let the *rouè* give you pain :  
And villains only teach you difficult lore :  
And sin be captain in the ignoble fight !

MORDAUNT.

Ha ! ha ! I give you joy then, excellent friend !  
Afflicted thus, you 've got your heart's desire,  
As the pious say ! But why make such ado ?  
We of the world make no such moan when blessed !

EDWIN.

Does soldier never groan because of wounds  
Which yet will grace him with bright honour's star ;  
And lie soft-tended by the red-cross maid ?

MORDAUNT.

I 'd sorry be to lessen aught of gain  
Accruing. Reap it all, and hoard it well  
In vaults, untouched of burglary of mine !

I carnally supposed a way of flight,  
Albeit some loose or rotten planks might threaten  
*The incautious foot*, had not won all contempt.

EDWIN.

The yawning chasm may be of other kind,  
I said ; and grief my way from greater grief ;  
And God hath bridged it for my threatened life  
With this wide-branching joy, whose stately top  
Bowed at the blast of His almighty word.

I ask but steady foot and unnerved brain ;  
Nor pause midway to turn my shuddering gaze  
Down on the giddy sweep of seething waters.  
Perhaps on other side, I'll lowly lay  
My body prone in the dust, and from the verge  
Peer in the dread abyss, and know my rescue !

MORDAUNT.

Farewell, then, faithful. On thy fallen love  
Cross happily to safe investigation !

*(Exit.)*

EDWIN.

He's gone ! and with him goes full half my pain !  
Oh ! that my enemy would write a book,  
Saith Job.

He gave a body and a tongue  
Extern to thoughts, which cursed me as my own,  
But hid beneath my robe.

He struck ~~the~~ the drum,  
And held the rebel standard up on high ;  
And forth there flocked to him the turbulent thoughts,  
Which held the town perplexed. The loyal now

Could sally from the gates, and smite them dead.

A purpose too, which weary nights agone,  
A new moon's curve of faintest light appeared,  
Low in the sky and hasting to its place,  
And after nights brightened and broadened slowly  
To scarcely-heeding eyes, now I behold  
Shining full-orbed for me, whose day is sunk.

OSCAR.

What project? Anything but grinding edge  
On edge of millstones, where no wheat is poured  
Between.

EDWIN.

I must to work, or else go mad.  
Before 'twas pastime to affect a call  
To regulate the world ;—to dig the soil,  
Kid-gloved, and with electroplated spade ;—  
Fight the great Waterloo of modern times  
With all review-day pomp, without the rough  
Bone-shattering balls, and hacking swords, and heap  
Of groaning men, and hoof-betrampled slain.

I must to work,—to sweep a crossing, and  
Live by my broom ;—I must to soldiering where  
The mettle and the sinew shall be tried.  
I must, or else be mad !

OSCAR.

What then, my friend ?

EDWIN.

*I will discover some unelbowed place,*

Where a man may swing his arms in passionate work.

As when the wind full-lunged, roars on the sails,  
That, bolted tight, nigh wreck the vacant mill,  
This terrible storm of suffering urges me  
To whirl my life round,—idly, even, if  
But motion be vouchsafed. 'Tis better grind  
The millstones, than upturn foundation stones.

OSCAR.

Why rush to distance. Think, not soul but soil  
You change in leagues and knots. Give native land  
The whirl of sails that circle on the mill.

EDWIN.

Sound heart may keep its coolness for such place,  
And sneer indifferent at the rise to power,  
Or sudden fall therefrom.

Now base intrigue  
Sits at the helm of state. The honest man  
In heart, unless a rogue in action, leaves  
His boat high stranded.

Men once rode to death  
Or victory in search of peace or pelf.

You edged your battle-axe in the olden time  
With your keen sorrows,—nerved your arm, and struck  
With the power and weight of all your agony;  
And when the pain or loss had died away,  
Behold a new life was already won.  
The night had waned and waning brought the day!  
But now ambition pulls the lappet, whispers

A lie in the ear ; or gold into the hand  
Pushes ; or lures with glistening promises :  
Even religion walks no more to break  
The fetters of the passion-bonded slave,  
Or soothe the sorrows of the broken heart ;—  
To wear the silk of woven creeds, for which  
The primitive worms gave very body and soul ;  
To flash the gold, which sunless miners dug  
In the dark ages, when a Christian was  
An outcast, like his Master, this is all—  
In Church or State.

And when the hurt of sin,  
In personal suffering, burns an unblocked way  
To fullest recognition, 'tis no time  
To cool oneself in marsh of general wrong.

OSCAR.

This burning sorrow will die out, and leave  
Cool bars and hearth behind.

EDWIN.

Die out ! What then ?

'Tis burning here, nor shall it thus consume,  
And leave but ashes of my soul and life !  
No ! if it must burn, with explosive power  
It shall propel me rocket-like to bear  
The line of rescue to some rock-doomed crew.  
My ruin shall bring safety elsewhere.

1876.

---

**Canto Third.**

**I. REVENGE.**

**II. RESCUE,**

**III. DEATH.**







## CANTO III.

---

### I.

### **R**evenge.

SCENE.—*London : Night.*

---

CLARA.

**I**'VE followed you from where the gasfronts blaze  
To curse you in a quiet place—to curse  
You, sir, with all the bitterness, that scums  
The seething pot where devils sit and brew  
The bubbling passions in a sinful soul.

MORDAUNT.

Begone ! I know you not—or I will call  
The watchman. Drunkenness bewrays your shame !

CLARA.

You know me not ! The parent knows his child ;  
Or ought to, if the features catch the light.

Am I not gaily dressed ? fine feathers, sir !  
All is your taste and nimble handywork.

MORDAUNT.

She's mad, poor creature, and I thought her bad !

CLARA.

Yes true, sir, bad. And mad because I 'm bad !  
And so I 've come to curse you !

MORDAUNT.

You mistake.

Poor thing, I pity you ; you 've lost yourself—

CLARA.

Indeed, sir, truly I have lost myself  
Thro' your misleading ; and I 've come to curse you.

MORDAUNT.

'Tis late for you alone upon the streets.

CLARA.

'Tis late ; yes, quite too late for me alone  
Upon the streets : and so I 've come to curse you,  
Who sent me straying in these cursed streets !

MORDAUNT.

Poor thing, I 'll take you home to waiting friends,  
Who grieve that you should wander in the night.

CLARA.

Poor thing ! yes very poor ; and poorest still  
In waiting friends, tho' in the night I am  
Wandering alone ; and so I come to curse you !

MORDAUNT.

You do mistake. I never saw you, woman ;  
Never harmed you.

CLARA.

Woman, forsooth !

MORDAUNT.

Lady, if—

CLARA.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! lady !

MORDAUNT.

I must pass. I fear

The noisy tongue is witness to the life !

I call "police" unless you cease molesting.

CLARA.

I came to curse you quietly, nor stir

The gaping crowd to eddy round my rage.

Look here and tell yourself, who speaks to you.

Forgotten am I ? Shall I show the face,

Painted and rouged so fine ? Don't know it yet !

MORDAUNT.

I know you not.

CLARA.

Ah could the conscious self

Be lost as easily, as voice and look,

I'd bless God for the losing. But I am—

Here in the lamplight say.

MORDAUNT:

Clara ! My God !

CLARA.

God ! you've no God. And me you robbed of God.

Had I had God, I'd never been like this.

And had you had a God, not so you'd thrust

A poor lost sheep to stray upon the wilds !

MORDAUNT.

Good night. I'm very sorry—

CLARA.

Going? No!

Indeed a thousand times I tell you no!  
You thought I was religious, and you might  
Tread on me. 'Tis the way of you good men;  
Too good to own the goodness of a God.

I've come to curse you, sir. And I will light  
A slow consuming fire, that you may learn  
How fares it with the burning souls in hell!

MORDAUNT.

I grieve to shame one whom I knew aforetime.  
Pray let me pass, or I must call in aid.

CLARA.

If it please you, we will seek a private place,  
And have our words untrammelled by the fear  
Of interrupting entrances. This way!

MORDAUNT.

Regretting much your case, I say farewell;  
And hope some better lot be yours in time.

CLARA.

You shall not 'scape me thus. Follow me, sir.  
Indeed! Obey me, or I maul your cheeks;  
And let you know the fiend I am thro' you.  
I'll raise a riot that will brand your name!

MORDAUNT.

'Twould shame me in the public streets to walk

Accompanied—

CLARA.

Ah ! to be the shaming thing  
Excites no pity, brings no helping hand ;  
Altho' you pushed me on the slippery slime !

But you shall follow at compulsive risk  
Of greater shame. I said I was a Devil,  
And you believe in *that*, tho' not in God !

*(They pass down some streets.)*

Here enter !

MORDAUNT.

Enter such ! I never did.

CLARA.

But made me ; and I will have revenge. Go in.  
*(They enter a luxuriously furnished room, and are seated.)*  
Now was it true or false the story told  
Of Edwin's treachery ?

MORDAUNT.

'Twas true in word ;  
In meaning false.

CLARA.

And none the less a lie,  
Base, black, and mean !

MORDAUNT.

It was in jest, nor meant  
To give you more than momentary wrath.  
For him,—I only meant to test his creed,  
And draw him from the fire before a crack

Had spoiled the porcelain. But he flew somewhere

CLARA.

I thought it true, as casual story dropped  
By one devoid of motive ; ignorant  
Of links that bound to other consequences,  
I broke the bond ; and fixed a cruel wound  
In one who loved me well.

Too high perhaps  
He soared : but I could draw him from the clouds ;  
Or he, who knows, have lent me wings to fly.  
But losing him, I lost myself thro' you !

MORDAUNT.

I am a wanderer, and nothing heard  
Of evil happenings.

CLARA.

You nothing heard !  
Heard nothing ! Ah, we think the world has felt  
An earthquake shock, when only we have fallen  
Upon the footway 'mid the careless crowd !

MORDAUNT.

I know not who has wrought you villainy.

CLARA.

The apostle of your creed, which lately dared  
The midday sun to fade its steadfast tint,  
Or point one flaw in all its woven folds.  
You brought him to my home.

MORDAUNT.

I would undo

The mischief I had wrought, I lost you one,—  
Would find a substitute.

CLARA.

You lost a man,  
And brought a snake, whose burnished slippery coils  
Wound round me ; crushed me ; then to other prey  
Attracted, thrust me forth to lie and rot !

MORDAUNT.

It is my grief ; but not to me the fault.

CLARA.

On you no fault ! What matters aye or no ?  
No sin, no guilt. But harm is here from you.  
And vengeance for the harm cannot be sin.

You posed among us as a teacher once ;  
Had doctrines most iconoclastic ; down  
From their dust-covered altars, or their shrines  
Of burnished gold,—the ancient and the new,—  
You swept the gods ! and placed in the high seat,  
Where once the idols sat, Humanity,  
The tender Mother, bounteous Father, loved  
And love-inspiring,—no child o'erlooked,  
Nor prodigal catalogued in the list of shame !

When need was none, it stroked with smoothing hand  
The purring vanity. So grand we were,—  
Too great to need a god ! So high, we crept  
On to the cushioned throne, and made us gods,  
And mewed for Egypt to assign us priests.



## MORDAUNT.

Divine Humanity, not deified,  
 Nor bestialised, had kept you safe from scorn.  
 Better be worshipped tho' a beast, than soiled  
 As woman. Some curse the unprotecting god,  
 Whose sacred precincts they have proudly left,  
 Or careless strayed from.

## CLARA.

Well it you becomes  
 To speak me thus. I never left the god.  
 I clinging to his garments, as a child  
 That walks by mother skirts, was hither led,—  
 Yes led, and left a guileless, helpless child  
 Crying in wild alarm its useless tears.

A man your friend, and is he not your god?  
 A man it was, who veiled my trusting eyes,  
 And with anointing oil me priestess made  
 To celebrate the freedom won our race—  
 The man and woman in their primal bliss  
 Of Paradise, untrammelled by the chains  
 Of social saws, and sacerdotal laws.

His cruel hand undid the bandages  
 And showed the oil was ordure, and the creed  
 Was lust,—the god a devil, who befouled me ;  
 Then lifted up his hands and cried aloud  
 In holy horror at my filthiness,  
 And drove me from him, staggering at his stroke,  
 And mocked me struggling in the fetid mire.  
**Man** did *that*—your friend and sometime god!

MORDAUNT.

Untouched I hear the bitter-tongued reproach !  
I have revised my creed. Humanity  
Is in its nonage, needs the pedagogue  
To widen out the circle of its faith,  
And give beneath its fluttering canvass room  
For wise reform.

CLARA.

Reform the gods in sooth !  
How many faiths have you been faithless to ?

A Roman candle shooting up its balls  
Of coloured fire, now blue, now pink, now white ;  
So pretty, the artist glories in his work,  
Unheeding that his pretty coloured ball,  
Thrown up for exhibition of his skill,  
Emitted sparks, and burned in gauzy dress  
Me, as I flitted thro' the summer crowd.

I was aflame with modern theories ;  
I cast the incubus of god away ;  
I vaunted in the science of the age.

But then a woman must not play with fire,  
As closer-cinctured manhood may, and singe  
Not e'en a social hair, much less his coat !

I fear some partiality has slipped  
Beneath the bandaged eyes of justice, sir,  
Tho' undetected by your god, perhaps,  
Whose subjects all might claim an even balance.

MORDAUNT.

*I held that man has attributes divine,*

And none but he should lord it in his soul,  
Or make his nature bow a slave to law ;  
None clip the pinions of his intellect,  
And cause that straddle in the farm-yard dirt,  
Which else had cloven the uplifting air.

I saw the Science of the ages sweep  
With fuller tide and stronger winds our bark  
To the calm haven of a perfect bliss.

CLARA.

Oh, pity 'twere, my last night of a speech  
To balk ! Familiar is the full round roll  
Of the grandiloquent phrase. Oh could you bring  
As lightly round again the hours I sat  
With eager heart and burning ears, and hands  
Impatient to uproot the cumbering old,  
And plant the new tree in the teeming soil !

Ah ! when the thought stirs in me I would leap,  
And tear the lying tongue up by its roots  
And fling it on the red-hot coals to burn !

MORDAUNT.

I did not say the perfect end was reached,  
And all the storms were cradled in the west,  
And only in the east a rising sun—

CLARA.

Then wherefore should I leave my childhood's god ?  
The storms not hushed, I want a pilot sure !  
*The end not reached—I've perished by the way !*

MORDAUNT.

Parents should guide our course, while immature—

CLARA.

The infant gods need elder gods to save  
Their godhead from ungodly imminence !  
My parents died. Alive, they kept, good souls,  
Me ignorant to keep me innocent.

And now my poor betraying innocence  
Lies murdered, and its murder cries on me.

I tell you, sir, there be who travel on  
The broad road, led by blindfold simpleness,  
And think the narrow gate will end the course.  
And cursèd be those mouth philosophers,  
Who cant and chant the soul-misleading song !

MORDAUNT.

We lay with vigour on another's back  
The sounding lash to ease our own reproach !

CLARA.

You see how vile I am ! and yet no bride  
In purer vestal white adorned her soul.  
You see how vile I am ; and yet no wife  
Was ever truer to her marriage vow !

In glozing villains I had truer trust,  
Than others in their honest-hearted lords ;  
Until they burst upon me what I was,  
And knocked me down with brutal force of hand  
And brutalizing tongue ; and made me think  
The heaped-up mire would be the guard I craved

From cruel sunlight : but in souls there lives  
A ghastly owl-eye, seeing in the dark !

You 'd have me close my eyes ? I could on God,  
And heaven ; but not on self and hell and hate,—  
The clearer view, the darker grows the night,  
Those bale-fires blazing redder, fiercer flames !  
And so I am this thing and see myself !

I thought to burrow deeper than the worms :  
I tell you worms can creep and gnaw in here !  
No peace from sucking tooth,—not lion's fang  
To rend and kill,—but slow, slow, ceaseless gnaw !  
And so I am this thing, and feel my pain !

MORDAUNT.

'Tis only morbid fancies drive you thus :  
Blue devils flit and flash in fancy's fumes !

CLARA.

You think 'tis devils drive one on in sin.  
I tell you angels chased me and I fled.  
I could not let their shining robes be soiled  
Embracing me, because we once were kin.

One was a little child, that knew no wrong,  
That knelt in snowy white at mother's knee,  
And laid to sleep the kiss on pillowed head ;  
That woke to radiant happiness, and sang  
With bird-like effervescences of joy.  
And one a girl, a pure, unsoiled girl,  
High heart exuberant in all her ways,—  
*I could kneel down and kiss her feet so pure,*

And circle round her with the hovering love  
A mother knows.

Ah ! I was such, so glad  
A child,—so pure a girl. I was, I was !  
And so I fled from memory of self,  
And sought evasion in still baser haunts.

MORDAUNT.

I pity you, and fain would render aid—

CLARA.

Aid ! aid ! Who asks for aid ? Not me ! Give aid  
To whining simpletons.

Thanks for the word !

The momentary weakness flies at it,  
As proper ghosts at dawn. 'Tis you shall bend  
The supplicating knee and sue my grace !

The Captive wisely makes in foreign land  
A home ; repining snaps no chain for him,  
But custom breeds a second nature soon.  
The Slave may rule the enslaved nobility.

I fretted,—yes I fretted sore my heart ;  
And with the chafing iron, steeped in blood  
The manacled limbs. 'Twas folly ! Wiser grown  
I enter heart and soul to queen it here.  
I grow a stranger to my former self,  
And mutely wonder at my memories.

I turn my grief to rage, and every pang  
Is life-blood pulsing thro' the channelled veins  
Of my fierce hatred, vivifying it.

I watch like she-wolf in the hungry eve  
Whose lean-ribbed cubs are snarling in the den,—  
I watch for prey. And what the prey, sir? What?  
The likeness of myself in olden times  
To make them like myself.

MORDAUNT.

Unwomanly!

CLARA.

There is another woman in my heart.  
But she is outcast here—is not admitted  
In *good society*! She would disgrace us!  
There is a woman in my heart, that weeps  
Dissolved in chemic fluid of my guilt  
And wickedness and womanhood's reproach:  
I could not live and give *her* harbouring!

But 'tis a transient mood—this melting mood;  
For soon there pours the might of arctic frost,  
That piles the icy mountains on the surge,  
And broadens out the floes upon the sea.

Yes, you may hear the waters underneath,  
Moaning:—it may be, in tumultuous swellings  
The deathly superstructure breaking up.  
What boots it? Round the pole the crumpled ice  
Gathers a weightier mass! The idle rage  
Is spent. Again on meek extended hands  
The chains are linked with stronger rivetings,  
And the deep cell receives its prisoner.  
*Less hope in revolution afterward!*

MORDAUNT.

But it can serve you nothing, other's loss ?

CLARA.

Why should I walk in morals, "nigger-skinned,"  
For street-boy Pharisees to hoot at me.  
Let all be black, and blackness is no taint ;  
Or all be white, I care not which it be.  
But if no nitred soap can wash me white,  
There lacks not pitch to make us one in sin !

In truth I could devour the slow-foot years  
In hungry rage to reach my craved revenge.  
I must be quick. A sinner's life, alas,  
Travels express—to find the broken bridge ?  
Then shattering crash, and roaring plunge ends all !

'Tis strange, sir, in those many hundred years  
Dame Nature has not learned the proper life  
To suit men to, if you and she, my sage,  
Are of one mind. I whisper it 'mong friends,  
Sin is a rack-rent landlord to the flesh !  
Revise your creed ; or dig up different stuff  
To fill the moulds with ere you prophecy.

How now, if God, and Christ, and Law have leagued  
Nature in merciless complicity 'gainst sin ?  
What shame is this ? The saint's life suits the flesh  
As well as spirit. I laugh at saint and sage :  
A saint I cannot be ; and saint I would—  
No never be ! Vengeance, vengeance I want !  
But be a *sage* like you, with brittle creeds,



That snap like spun glass ; and tho' easily  
Remolten in the blaze, yet snapping leave  
Poisonous splinters, like my hate, to spread  
A rankling sore that will corrode your flesh !  
Philosopher, your Creed be curse to you !  
Mayhap you 'll think my curse a blessing, sir.  
And yet I know none worse, or I would choose it !  
I pray—but whom to pray to is not said !  
You 've left us none to adjure by when we curse !  
'Tis destitution, which blasphemers, whom  
You number numerously in your sect, must blame,  
And ask you to remove, when next the Pope  
And Cardinals in conclave forge decrees.  
You have a sister, sir ?

MORDAUNT.

Yes.

CLARA.

Two ?

MORDAUNT.

Yes.

CLARA.

Three ?

MORDAUNT.

Yes, three.

CLARA.

Ha ! ha ! My curse has threefold thongs  
To lash you by ! I pray your sisters three  
Shall be devout disciples of your creed ;

And each admirers find, who'll live by rule,  
The true deduction of your oracles,  
As he did whom you wot of. May they stand  
In open street, and curse their brother thus,  
With all their concentrated hate, as I do.  
Oh may they sink from pit to lower pit,  
As I have. Let their lips, which kissed you in  
Pure childhood, be defiled in common use ;  
Their tongues, that prayed one childish prayer  
With you, belch forth the scathing curse of hell ;  
And let those sisters reel from mad debauch,  
Into the sickening sense of what  
Their brother made them thus, and vomit on  
His head and soul the foulness of their lives !

MORDAUNT.

You do outstrip all license.

CLARA.

Yes, I strip

It bare. There is no decency with us  
Of comely clothing for unseemly facts !  
Tis nature, sir. *In naturalibus !*  
And further pray I, all of womankind,  
That proximate to you in stabbing reach  
May hold the poisoned poniard in their hand,  
Kindred to you and also kin to me,—  
To you in blood, to me in *natural* life.  
If ever woman lie upon your breast  
In the sweet links of love—just look one look—

These feathers, finery, rouge, and spicery—  
May she be such one day in the free lands,  
“No social saws and sacerdotal laws”  
Withstanding.

And if ever daughter fill  
Your eye with growing loveliness, and nought  
Seem half so fair on earth,—just look again,  
May she be such!

MORDAUNT.

Ah! 'tis too horrible!

I will not stay.

CLARA.

You came because you must;  
And stay you shall for like compulsive must.  
Yet what repulsive here? 'Tis nature all!  
Condemn you me? The issue of your creed  
Am I, being such, offspring legitimate!  
You cannot bastardise the child and keep  
The mother lawful wife.

Did you in might  
Of thunder-wielding Jove o'erturn the seat  
Of tyrant Saturn's law-established reign?  
And would you buttress up your new-built throne  
With fractured pillars pillaged from the heap  
Of ruined splendours.

God had said, “Thou shalt not.  
And you replied with scorn, “There is no God.”  
And now, usurper, dare you in the void .

To echo this, "Thou shalt not." You make law,  
Having abolished law ! Will you a Right  
And Wrong maintain, having denounced the Right  
And Wrong which sat with title on the throne ?

The old régime may stand in spite of faults,  
Which men would scorn themselves if tamely borne  
One hour beneath the new brand of a sceptre  
That has no royal lineage, nor the right  
Prescriptive of hoar, venerable age !

If there be law, let it be God's. The judge  
Be God,—not changing whim and partial man !

I 'll do you harm. And dare you call it wrong !  
They worship evil in the savage world :  
'Tis here incarnate. You will feel the wrath  
Of the offended God. You made us gods  
To drink the cup of pleasure undeterred,—  
Strange is it, that the maddening thirst  
Is for revenge on you and all your clan !

MORDAUNT.

You seem more blown with anger finding vent  
'Gainst me than him, who did you rousing wrong !

CLARA.

Think you so ?

What !

No sir. But I can speak  
A feeble story of my hate for you— !  
For HIM—

It lacks expression !

'Tis relief  
To let the blustering passions rave in gusts,  
And herald the approaching tempest !

But  
The dumb, and heavily-weighted silence sinks  
Sole prelude of the maniac hurricane,  
And all engulfing earthquake.

At such time  
Into the vast abysm, where the storm gathers  
Its plenitude, the spacious air is drawn  
Down, as the whirlpool gulphs the sinking seas !

Oh Earth has neither room nor verge enough—  
Oh Time in all its ages has not space  
For my revenge on him !

'Tis only Hell,—  
Only Eternity—

Mark you, sir,—  
Sweep into limbo Heaven and all its bliss.  
But leave me Hell. I care not for the one ;  
I won't forego the other !

Leave me Hell—  
I'll meet him there, and oh !—

So leave me Hell !

---

II.

Rescue.

SCENE—*London: a room entirely bare and unfurnished.*

---

CLARA.

'Tis good of you to come. I writ in hope,  
That if no kindness would grant my plea ;  
At least the fear of desperate passions might  
Purchase protection at a shrewish word.

MORDAUNT.

I came because you asked, no fear inciting.  
It has touched me, that I did you harm,—at least  
In your conception.

CLARA.

Real were the threats ;  
And fateful efforts trained the guns on you,  
Heavily shotted. You had sunk like lead  
Amid the ravenous waters ! But 'tis past.

MORDAUNT.

I thank you. But my peace sat smiling !

CLARA.

Yes,

The deed would be its only signal fire.

But that is past.

There is a fear upon me,  
Sin is eternal loss. And tho' I sow  
Its fields for all the ages I would reap  
But only loss and still more bitter loss.

Four weeks and days are gone, since when I stopped  
Aghast upon the brink ; and looked down, down  
To nethermost hell. A sight to give one pause,  
And make the giddy brain to reel, altho'  
Assured by sage philosophers, that they  
Abolished all such figments of the Church.

You see this room, an iron trestle all  
Its garniture,—a whirlwind swept it bare,  
Whose swirling eddies roared from that abyss,  
And swept my life as bare of all its life.

Four days I've felt no fire, and ate no food—

MORDAUNT.

Here's money, over and above. Get food.

CLARA.

Thanks, sir, but I'll not touch it. Once I cursed ;  
And now no favour.

MORDAUNT.

Here is money ; take it.

CLARA.

I need it not. The hungry pain that gnawed  
With wolfish pangs is weakened down to peace.

MORDAUNT.

To starve yourself is contrary to law!

CLARA.

Ah, to the law! and you abet the law?  
'Twas once your creed that law and slavery  
Were cognate. Your co-helpers bade us please  
Our nature spite of Law, when we, poor fools,  
Knew nothing—more than infants, wiled to stray  
By forest flowers, know of the wild beasts' lair.

MORDAUNT.

But life is yours. Cast not away the prize,  
Which law-doomed kings would barter crowns to buy.

CLARA.

Appraise my life.

MORDAUNT.

'Tis life.

CLARA.

Know you whereby  
I could be clean to touch the hands of women who  
Have kept their first estate.

*(Mordaunt pauses for some minutes.)*

Alas so slow  
The answer in its coming, it has told  
Its purport ere it comes.

MORDAUNT.

I know of none.

CLARA.

Know you whereby I can be clean to look



Upon myself without disdain, unless  
I give the charter of nobility  
To this vile life, and title it of grace?

MORDAUNT.

These matters in opinion rest; and faith  
Can give them life and being in our minds,  
Or relegate them to nonentity.

What shame is here, is glory elsewhere.  
A crime in one is honourable deed  
In some community endowed as well  
With brain and tongue and executing hand.  
Tastes differ, judgments differ; nothing's sure  
And steadfast. Please the whim; enjoy the hour.

CLARA.

Ah! can you sit and look me in the face,  
And speak that doctrine.

Here on pedestal  
The statue stands commemorating, nay  
Incarnating the issues of your creed.

Good sir, one pleased the whim, enjoyed the hour  
And now what can you do for me? Am I  
Omitted from the plan? My soul and life  
Made fuel for the comfortable hearth  
Whereby another sat and warmed himself,  
And rose and left the cold ash for the pit?

I here confront you with this ghastly thing,  
Myself. You bid me live. Ah, could I cease  
To know and think and feel and judge, so soon

As I have ceased to do what men call "live,"  
I'd cast that filthy, ragged clout away  
That swathes me in corruption. I have yearned  
Above the black, cold river,—as a waif  
Of the city, hunger-bitten, tempest-driven,  
Ravens for the viands and the warmth and cheer,  
Which pitiless windows shade not from his sight,—  
So have I hung with yearning to the wave  
For the dark rest, that lures with mocking show ;  
And the rough hand that snatched me back and shook  
Me from the glamour of its witchery  
Was this, "The river cannot wash thee clean."

Oh, if I live for ever, and there be  
No way to ease me of this loathsome self !

You've said, "No God, no hell ;" and bid us hail  
This gospel, tho' it lose a heaven above,  
Bidding us take our heavenly pastime here.

And once I said, "Take Heaven, but leave me Hell.  
I will avenge me there ; that is my Heaven."  
But time came since, believe it, I have cried,—  
My sins with million tongues so clamorous,—  
"Altho' there be no Heaven, if there be God,  
O God, decree the judgment shall be set,  
And I receive my sentence from the books."

Earth has no penalty that I can crave !  
Full freedom to destroy one's soul and life,  
But not to touch the pence or hurt the peace  
Of neighbours !

MORDAUNT.

"Tis a grievance seldom mourned !

CLARA.

"Tis false. How many thousands every day  
Do sheriff's work upon themselves to still  
The avenger's cry within. The thing I loathed,  
I subjected my flesh and spirit to,  
As penance, devil-cheated ; for no sin  
Atones for sin, but as the drunkard's cup  
Inflames the thirst, its mission was to slake.

The murderer brings his harassed spirit back,  
And begs the mercy of the noose and drop ;  
" I've made atonement," shall he cry amid  
The vengeful shades, and pass acquitted there.  
But I could lay no salve on festering sores.

MORDAUNT.

Phantasmagorial troubles of a mind  
O'erbalanced.

CLARA.

Troubles, from the which mankind  
Have deemed their ruffians most conspicuously  
Exempt, might challenge philosophic thought,  
And philanthropic easement.

You have done  
Me wrong ; and in the aftertime may come  
A sorrow, that will enter in and grow,  
As memory paints the vision of my fall.

MORDAUNT.

Oh I protest. Each lords it in his life ;

And issues humbly wait upon our will,  
Obsequious to prepare the ordered state.

CLARA.

True, sir, we reap the harvest we have sown,  
And that makes bitter eating. In the hand  
The simple seed shows little variance :  
And so it happen may to you, the crop  
Be other than you think.

I brought you here  
To ask your pardon for my violence.  
You wrought me harm ; my anger is o'erblown.  
You've wrought me good ; and I do proffer thanks.

MORDAUNT.

Harm I admit not. Good is undisclosed.

CLARA.

A good I filched in opening out my sores.  
The sceptic folly whispered, from your creed  
Might fall a richer crumb for Lazarus.

A good I filched, in weakness fearing scorn  
Would vail to strip me of new covering robes :  
The blasts are cold round such a heart as mine ;  
And frozen fingers clutch, death-cold, death-strong,  
Even a rag that cheats the shivering flesh ;  
But this is warm, so warm, like arctic fur—

MORDAUNT.

I give you honest property in aught  
You've stolen from me, glad if my repute  
Rise higher than rough robber of your robes !

CLARA.

Ah friend, oft hands that clothe the naked flesh,  
Are kin to tongues that strip the spirit bare.

MORDAUNT.

My hand and tongue shall know an equal kindness.

CLARA.

Then hear how rescue found me,—where I gained  
My shelter from the stinging hail and sleet.  
Perchance 'twill soothe one day some grief to you.  
There is the charnel pit in Christian cities,  
Whose doors wide open stand, and *women* borne  
Thro' them, return no more to life above,—  
The three-mouthed monster roaring frights them back  
To rot amid the shades. But Christian *men*  
May come and go, and scarce in sleepy yawn  
Does Cerberus open up his jaws at sound  
Of their frequenting footsteps.

In such pit

The man who was high-priest for godless Manhood,—  
The man who glorified our natural sanctity,  
If only Christ and God were out of sight,—  
The man who vowed the vow to me and broke it,—  
The man who in assemblage of your sect,  
With solemn separation made me his,  
Above, beyond all law, that we might work  
Freedom from Law for man and womankind,  
Then used the law to make me lawfully  
An outcast, a poor, spurned, loathed, trampled thing—

One night he came.

I heard the treacherous laugh,  
The low insinuating word.

I hid myself,  
Until the palpitating heart had nerve  
To raise the brimming goblet of revenge  
To the thirsty lip and feverish throat, and drain  
It to the dregs, nor lose a precious drop !

Oh how it blessed the dry and sun-hacked lip !  
Oh how it cooled the blistered, burning mouth !  
Oh how it gurgled laughing down the throat !

Revenge ! Revenge ! oh it, as melting ice,  
Is cool ; and yet 'tis hot as molten brass !  
So cool to drink ! to cease the draught for sake  
Of bated breath, burns ;—but to lose the cup—

It frightens me again to stir the ashes ;  
The stray sparks gleam altho' she drenched them down !  
She—know you ?—yet I know no name to name  
Her by, no more than if an angel came,  
And whispered in the vision of the night ;  
This only,—“ Marian is my name ” she said.  
Oh at my worst my angel came to me.

Listen, I was mad, like wild-beast rolled in blood !  
I had clothed him in disgrace, the woman-whipped !  
I had daubed him over with the blackest mud !  
I rang his ears with public laughter. I  
Grew *frantic as the echoes pealing back*

Told how Revenge had prospered.

Then I said,

“I’ll strike him nearer, deadlier to the heart.  
The bad world laughs into forgetfulness,—  
Would kick the toothless scandal from its door,  
So soon as time has drawn its power to hurt.

The woman who has got by law my place,  
Shall know the three days’ story of the town.  
I’ll madden her with cruel, venomous words,  
And make her bond-slave to my hate to sting  
With jibes, persistent as the summer midge.”

Next day I went with ribaldry, keen-barbed,  
And filthy verbiage such as reckless tongues  
In life like ours find ready for the flinging.  
Apparelled soberly, demure in look  
I gained admittance.

On a couch there sat  
One plying swift a needle in coarse work  
That asked a poorer wearer. From her hand  
It dropped, and rising up she showed a form  
And face, that cowed my devil’s purpose. But  
I roused me,—waited the closing door,—then said,  
“I was your predecessor. For a year  
I ruled this house ; and held the master of it  
Mine. In the seat you fill, I sat, and thought  
Myself the mistress by a stronger chain  
Than cold, hard Law.

You I congratulate,

Me fallen, that Law's strong links are riveted  
To keep possession, when the spiritual bond  
Is snapped by rust, that with corroding tooth  
Of sensual passion weakens, then destroys.

Yet your strong Law cannot protect you all.

Your husband, madam, fluttered down one night  
Among us offal, leaving such clean fare  
As grace and purity like yours afford ;  
For reasons all inscrutable to me,  
But that to carrion crow the putrid mass  
More zest from appetising flavour yields.

I took the decent privilege of wife  
Again, and drove the shamed intruder off  
With ruffled feathers. So I earn your thanks !

See here is blood ! I kept my fingers safe  
From cleansing soap, that it might witness true  
How dovescotes with monotonous coos are poor  
Provision for the filthy carnivore.

I struck him once for vengeance of my own !  
I struck him twice for vengeance of my sex !  
I would have struck him, struck him, struck him still ;  
And thro' the unhurrying ages of a hell  
Would strike his flesh ; and thro' the tortured ear  
Strike with reiterated yells his spirit—."

To this I struggled,—then I turned to fly,  
O'ercome by the large pity in her eyes.

For thus it was. She was so pure and sweet,



A girl in years of budding womanhood,  
I felt abashed. And then I said, "His wife ;"  
So on,—but falteringly, with pause to pick  
A cleaner word. And as my meaning broke  
From out the obscuring cloud, the deep-dyed blush,  
The shame embarrassed face, the pitying eyes.  
The tremulous clasp of sympathising hand,  
As nearer me she stole, unnerved me so,  
That all my barbèd curses, poisoned jibes,  
Dropt from me, as the pendent icicle  
Slips from the grasp of fever-heated palms  
In shivering shivers on a marble floor.

I turned to fly, defenceless, over-matched,  
Disarmed my cruel hate by simple love.

My flight arrested by her reaching hand  
I thrust her from me, a wild beast at bay ;  
But no, those pitying eyes, and loving slide  
Of circling arms o'ercame the savagery ;  
And, sobbing, to her breast she drew my sobs.

A girl in years,—but oh, the angel heart  
Needs no maturing age,—had learned the tone  
That pities and subdues.

No wife was she,  
But friend of her, who held the piteous place,—  
The iron furnace of a bad man's wife ;  
And glad, so glad,—and made me share her gladness  
That this one coal gave not its added heat,  
But quenched in pity should unharming lie.

How is it, sir, that you philosophers,  
Who speak so grandly of the human race,  
Can make no woman like this tender girl?  
The Jesus whom you softly laughed at, made  
Her fear no scorpion's sting, nor leper's touch,  
As mine was. Think you, sir, no need to mould  
The proper healer for our sores and wounds?  
You later Luthers, who have bravely burned  
The Papal Bulls restricting our morale,  
And generously left us free to sin—  
There, there, my erring tongue slips to the groove  
In which it twisted ceaselessly those years  
In which I planned revenge.

MORDAUNT.

My eagerness  
To hear this new apostle's doctrine broached  
Will borrow patience for the heaviest taunts.

CLARA.

Ah friend, it is the old that newest is,  
When undreamt blossoms burgeon from its rind :  
The strangest stranger is who drops disguise,  
And shows the loved face growing on the eye.  
The Jesus whom you set for laughter, made  
Her fear no scorpion's sting, nor leper's touch  
As mine was. In his robes I wrap me warm  
From icy blasts !

MORDAUNT.

What ! Yield so late aday,

And rest in old-wives' fables, newly tricked,  
Festooned, and garlanded by damsel rare  
In specious phrase. But I must keep my vow,  
A patient listener, nor pull down the arch,  
Which spans the highway to the new-found peace.

CLARA.

I tell you, friend, that name of Jesus Christ  
Is still a mighty name to conjure by ;  
It makes the tigers cower and cringe, if not  
Yet rendered animals domesticate.

I never knew beforetime Jesus lived  
As more than mythic hero of His church,  
And creed propounder ; but for common use  
Of tempted lives and sorrowing hearts He was  
Too far remote, secluded in the clouds,—  
A thought but little thought of now ; a judge,  
Whom no one trembles at till doomday comes.  
“ No myth, He lives somewhere accessible !  
That girl has known him ! ”

Yes, I saw ! I felt !

Ah, we who live the Ishmael life are keen  
To note the lightest print on desert sands,—  
Manner, and tone, and face I scrutinised ;  
And had there crossed the borderland one thought  
Of preaching goodness at an erring sister,  
My quick resenting notice had released,  
The sharp rebuff, drawn to the arrow head.

*But no : she wiled me on to hear of Him,*

Who was her own great need and staunchest friend,  
And truest comforter in all the world.  
And I was needy, friendless, sorrowing ;  
And all my soul was like the moon-drawn sea,  
With heaving billows blindly reaching up—  
Until we parted ; and the tide went down.

The tide went down, slow ebbing, ebbing down.  
Oh it was horrible. I nigh went mad !  
My life uncovered slowly foot by foot.  
And “Marian” clung to me in haunting thought  
With dewy eyes and tender touch and tone :  
I could not bury in the traitorous shore  
One foulness—turning, there the pure eyes looked  
So sadly at the hasty, bootless task.

I burst in rage, and hooted words of scorn  
At her intrusive presence on my heart ;  
But flooding tears still on their torrent bore  
Her words, her touch, as friendly rivers float  
The freighted rafts to land-beleagured towns.

When calmer grown, I pillowed my torn heart  
On Marian’s name ; and rose to cleanse my flesh,  
And ate no food at purchase of my soul.

I sought for money-changers to accept  
My coins, and give me blessings in their stead,  
Which I might offer in the holy courts,  
As sacrifice atoning for my sin.  
I thrust a gold piece in a baby’s hand,  
Borne on a ragged arm. “God bless you, lady,”

The hungry mother cried, until her eye  
Lighted upon my garb ; and then she flung  
It in the mire, "Gude fend us, bairne," she said !

I slank away, too vile to do a kindness,  
And hurled the price of blood into the tide.  
And then the NAME worked,—His of whom she spake.  
All in the silent, lonely nights Thought came  
And went, and carried traffic to and fro.

Once slumber stole upon me, and I dreamed  
It was my judgment day. The courts were thronged ;  
Tier above tier, the actions of my life  
Full-faced, stared down on me. Awhile they mocked  
To see my shame ; awhile they chattered idly,  
And summoned by the crier, each one gave  
A testimony clear and quick against me !

And none were on my side, save those I spake of  
Once—angels that followed after, and I fled,—  
The Child, the Girl, and Marian, and ONE  
Who stood in shadow by them. HIM I feared,  
Until as Marian sobbed, HE reached a hand,  
And laid its gentle pressure on her head,  
And straight she lifted up, and smiled on me  
Thro' tears. A wound was centred in that hand !

MORDAUNT.

Ah, you were weak and visionary ; want of food—

CLARA.

Yes, weak. But, fallen so low as we are, dreams  
Are blessed, which o'er the waking horrors fling

The faintest tinge of hope.

That reaching hand—  
My soul rose up and said it reached to her  
Thro' Marian.

Awake, I felt its impress.  
“A wounded hand, and not a wounding sword  
Holds Jesu's kingly power,” she said in ears  
Heedless then,—*now* my soul must know the truth.

A little book, she gave, with folded leaf  
Had lain safe-guarded from my shrinking eye,—  
“Why antedate the Judgment. Doom rides fast!”  
My groping fingers ran along the fold,  
And laid it open on my knee, and smoothed  
The crumpled page. The street lamp's wavering light,  
As the wild wind went roaring round its place,  
Gave fitful aid. With paling cheek I read,  
And fearful, fear-urged eye, the passage thus,—  
“The Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him  
A woman. . . . And they set her in the midst.”  
'Twas me! 'twas me! I stood there in the midst!  
The horny eyes of all that brutal mob  
Gored me,—And yet I felt it not. 'Twas HE,  
My judge, I shrank from, lest He 'd lift the glance,  
Which glowed with holy fire, and shrivel up  
The poor protection of my rented veil!

He hears the madding tongues awhile, then speaks;  
The calm, high words move with a lordly step,  
“He that among you without sin is, let

Him first cast stone at her."

I heard it, aye,

I heard it.

Judge me, Lord of Nazareth !

This world, that spits on me, Thou knowest their ways

In the twilight, in the evening, in the black

And dark night. Judge me, Lord of Nazareth !

But lo ! the coward feet conveyed them swift

Away. Less and still less around Him stood ;

And I there in the midst !

Not one—the cowards !—

To stay and help me bear the lifted eyes !

Not one,—the last step slinks away !

Alone

There in the midst—the vacant court—I stood

Alone !

He lifted up, and looked me through ;

And looked thro' all my gathered life ! O God !

I bowed my head to take the final doom !

The words came ; flowed across the burning marl,

A cooling river of sweet sounds, and sank

Down to the depths of being. Thus He said,

"Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin

No more."

To me He spoke. I heard the words.

And I will carry them, His very words,

Writ on my heart, and read them to him, Judge  
Of quick and dead.

Four days are gone since then.  
I broke from all the paths, the people, all  
The loathsomeness, that mocked me with a grave.

The words rang in me, like the clashing bells  
That rock the steeple with their wild alarm.  
“Go sin no more ! go sin—go sin no more !”  
They clanged. And all my life had turned to sin—  
To eat, to drink, to dress, to sleep—’twas sin ;  
For I was nought but sin. Go sin no more !!

The words ring in me with a soothing chime,  
As bells, whose carols fall on open fields,  
And rest in quiet valleys—“Sin no more ;  
Go, sin no more ; and sin—and sin no more.”  
Two days I fasted for the sake of her,  
Who scorned me not,—the unsullied girl, who pained  
With mirror likeness of the purity  
I lost : and two days more for Him, her Lord,  
Purer than purest purity conceives,  
Who woke no barren grief above my loss,  
But stirred an eager hunger to be like.

When conscience clamoured loud for vengeance fit  
From the just Judge upon my heinous deeds,  
And thought no rest unless He smote me down,  
I passed in vision ’neath the olive trees,  
And saw a pure soul there in anguish bowed.  
And drawing nigh to pity one akin



In grief, tho' not in life, I wiped the drops  
Of trickling blood. And lo each drop, a sin,  
That stung me with remembrance. In my hand  
A cup I found : a whisper—"Give him drink."  
"Tis balm," I said, "to ease this suffering soul ;"  
And looking, saw myself reflected there !  
And when I clasped to kiss the kindly hand  
He reached to soothe my grief, a wound was there  
Beneath my lips ; and dropping at His feet  
With passionate sobbing, thro' my tears I saw  
Fresh-open gashes pour their sanguine tide.

And loud I shrieked, "O God, it is enough ;  
Force me no more to hurt my dearest Lord."  
Then came a voice, "It is enough, I suffered !"

So I am still, the judgment satisfied ;  
And like a dawn, that grows into a city,  
And fills the shadowed streets, and winds along  
The crooked alleys, there has come a hope,  
And with it too a stealing timorous peace.

MORDAUNT.

I will not double injury, nor fright  
This timorous visitant. So long as clouds  
Are in the far horizon, they will serve,  
As well as solid mountains, for the eye  
Of squeamish landsman on the heaving sea.

But fear not ; if the fleecy vapours rise,  
The seaman's compass guides you safe to port,  
Whose strong foundations wind nor tide can shake.

But I will puff aside with naughty breath  
No cloudy comfort.

CLARA.

Thanks. To say it is  
Beyond your prevalence were empty boast.

MORDAUNT.

Let me prevail to offer timely help.

CLARA.

I have no wants ; and therefore want no help.  
But ~~this~~ in kindness render to my name :  
Some day, if chance occur, let Edwin know  
I was not all untrue. That favour grant.

MORDAUNT.

But what for you ? I cannot leave you thus !

CLARA.

I have but two things in my heart to do ;  
They done, my life would lay its tired head down,  
And sleep, if 'twere God's will. You smile. How strange  
They sound on lips of mine, " If 'twere God's will."  
Those words have brought the nearest thing to smiles  
Into my darkened heart for long, sad years.

See this, a little locket with my hair,  
And in a circling scroll, " Jno. viii. 11 ;"  
And " Marian " writ without. She'll know me thus.

My mother gave me gold, a birthday gift :  
First gold, in affluence of childish joy  
I treasured it, until death sanctified  
The hand that gave it. Then 'twas holy too.

It tarried with me, like a lamp that burns  
In some night-clouded shrine, and fades at dawn  
Into the golden light of rising day.

It was the only pure thing I had left,  
And now it tokens forth the darkness gone.

So this conveyed to her, who brought the dawn,  
Is one thing done.

The other is, her steps  
To follow, and to rescue one who like  
Myself has been, and like I trust shall be.

MORDAUNT.

I press my aid.

CLARA.

I thank the kindness of it.  
'Tis pleasant at the poor and faltering last,  
To hear a kind word spoken. More than deeds,  
Which, entered by the thronging doors, were lost  
To separate cognisance, we value them.

MORDAUNT.

Let me put deeds to words ; and flesh and spirit  
Conjoined, will make a creature, tho' a mortal,  
More competent to help than dreamy phantoms.

CLARA.

My visions give you trouble. Stay awhile  
And here one more, and let it answer be.

Last night the snow was on the muffled street ;  
The frost had burnished all the glittering stars ;  
*The wind* blew keen and bitter to the heart.

Vain had I tracked that friend from place to place,  
And came back wearied, ice-like, spiritless,—  
Chill iron bars for leaping, welcoming blaze,—  
Chill iron for the resting pallet's warmth.

I lay and slept in deathly stupor there ;  
Till in my dream I found my friend, and grasped  
And tore her from a sullyng presence. Then  
A rude hand dashed us sunder ; and I fell  
In ice-cold waters. Swift the torrent bore  
Me past the slippery granite walls with touch  
Of fruitless fingers ; and from oozy piles  
It tore the straining arms, until I lay  
Trampled and soiled by the foul stream below,  
As by the wicked city's tide above.

At end of days they on a trestle threw  
The clay-cold figure that had held my soul,  
With dripping raiment and dishevelled hair,—  
And I sat by, a silent, hooded thing.

Awhile the city roar went sounding on,  
The quiet dead unheeding ; save when a foot  
Brought in a solitary searcher for  
The lost ; and sobs broke forth to find their loss,  
Finding the lost ; or breaking hearts went back  
To bear the burden of an unknown fate.

And none came seeking me,—none missed me, none !  
The dismal, dolorous drip upon the stone  
From the soaked dress and dank, unbraided hair  
Saddened the silence like a stifled sob.

A great self-pity welled up in my heart,  
And then I muttered, "*She* would mourn this dead."

I rose, and thro' the unechoing streets I passed  
In the grey shadows of the chilly dawn,  
And told my errand at her sleeping door.  
And with me hand in hand,—aye hand in hand,—  
Unshamed she stood beside the lonely dead.

She pressed the moisture from the long, loose hair,  
And gently closed the eyes, and wiped the lips,  
And wrapped the body all in spotless white,  
And laid the tired hands on the unheaving breast;  
Then drew the face-cloth, and beneath it laid  
A long-drawn kiss.

The morning broke around;  
But I was comforted, and fell on sleep.

MORDAUNT.

The vision thus?

---

III.

**Death.**

SCENE—*London : a street, afterwards a park.*

---

MORDAUNT.

Aubrey, Aubrey !

AUBREY.

Ho, Mordaunt !

MORDAUNT.

I have run  
Life-jeopardising risks mid hoofs and wheels  
To catch what neither eye nor ear would grant.  
Why slight your friends? Confess.

AUBREY.

These eddying crowds  
So blur the slight, one sees and sees not. The ear  
So full of sound is crammed, it has no room  
To sort its goods ; and good and bad are mixed,  
Friend's voice, foe's curse.

MORDAUNT.

But I am not a foe,

Altho' you think it. What is in your mind,  
I know. You all concert to make me culprit.

AUBREY.

You disconcert me. I am unaware—

MORDAUNT (*aside*).

I am stricken with this plague; and like a fool  
Bewray myself. A simple word is charge  
Sworn, filed, and entered on the list of court  
For earliest hearing.

(*aloud.*) Where is Edwin?

AUBREY.

That

Depends.

MORDAUNT.

I knew you meant to imply my guilt!

AUBREY.

I am at loss!

MORDAUNT.

Why pass my gestures, then,  
That signalled my desire? Why deaf to calls,  
That followed close upon your ears? And why  
The riddling answer give me, "that depends"?

AUBREY.

The woman's reason must be mine—Because.

MORDAUNT.

Poor woman, I—It haunts me so! Poor Clara!

AUBREY.

*You mean?*

MORDAUNT.

What you mean, if you would be plain.  
Look ! Strange, how strange ! 'Twas on this spot we  
met !  
Look, there the lamp-post in whose shade she lingered ;  
There the very flag she stood on, when the light  
Permitted, drew her sin-marked features back  
To appal my memory.

AUBREY.

You hint so much—

MORDAUNT.

Tell true. Thought you her blood was on my hands,  
When shrinking from my knowledge ?

AUBREY.

Neither shrank  
I from you, nor know I of stain of blood.

MORDAUNT.

You knew not Clara brought my foolish jest,  
And daubed its grinning features with the blood  
Of her foul-murdered soul, and set it up  
A ghastly thing to fright me, gibbering at  
Me, when I close my eyes ? And knew you not,  
They charged me with the cruel gash, that drove  
Her startled spirit homeless on the void  
Hereafter ? Lodged me in a stony cell,  
The iron on my wrists, and on my head  
Disgrace ? And heard you not the very hand  
Which striking set her free from infamy,



Was his who did the dastard traitor's part  
And made her infamous? Heard you not this!

AUBREY.

A jest, and death, and murder,—all you mix—  
Infamy, imprisonment—I know it not!

MORDAUNT.

They fought at Thrasimene, and heard no sound  
Of rolling thunder 'mid the hills, and tread  
Of earthquake by the shore!

You knew not this!

Well said she, 'tis we only fall, and stunned  
Obstruct the path!

AUBREY.

Tell me it through from end

To end; nor let me knock against the walls  
In vain endeavour to escape and find  
Clear space.

MORDAUNT.

Tell you it through! Not worlds would tempt  
To speak that woman's speech! Oh, had you seen  
Her, when she rose to curse me, towering up  
Above me, all her form dilated! Her eyes,  
Agleam with replicating flashes, shot  
Along the pointing finger lightning at me!  
Her red lips glowing with the lava tide,  
That burst from the heaving breast's volcanic throes—  
I wake at nights atremble from my dreams,  
And hear like a retreating thunderstorm.

That mutters sullenly thro' mountain gaps,  
The lingering echoes of that awful curse.

But you can buckle armour on and fight  
Defiantly a fear. 'Tis this unmans me—  
One wintry night, the snow upon the street,  
In her chill room she sued for pardon. Oh!  
How broken! Her drooping form, and head  
Low leaning on the tremulous hand, and voice  
With such soul-melting pathos mourning all  
Her wrongfulness of life, the very stones  
Had wept! The fierce impassioned spirit quelled,  
And anger for herself reserved alone!

AUBREY.

You had the honourable office given  
To soothe her heartache.

MORDAUNT.

There a sorrow lies.

Her grief so shifted places with a perilous,  
Fantastic reindorsement of a creed,  
Discarded by enlightened folk, that I  
Befriended heresy, when I meant to soothe  
Her mind's distress; and luckless smote her grief  
Full force with blow aimed straight at heresy.

Thus when your favourite at your heel is dashed  
Headlong by desperate rush of couchant bull-dog;  
They whirl, and wheel, and roll, and rise, and show  
Here, there the twisted bodies; and your stroke  
Falls foul on friend, your aid mishelps the foe:

The battle ended, after you there limps  
A pain-suspended limb, that frets you sore.

No better than my dog, I helped her grief!  
And after me it comes with whimpering sound,  
And wounding with its wounds. And I am brute  
Enough to turn and kick it for its pains;  
And like a dog it takes the stroke, and haunts  
With the upraiding of its wistful eyes.

AUBREY.

You deal harsh measure to yourself. No doubt  
She sought and had full comfort in your voice.

MORDAUNT.

Nay. But here's a danger, here! I was not wont  
To lodge wayfaring Guilt. I turned it out  
To roadside hospitality, or to find  
A workhouse welcome for the sorry tramp  
In craven minds. But now this beggar comes  
And struts the master in the house and stays  
In ragged filth and pestilential fumes.

I'm weak,—my conscience sickening every day  
To more disastrous evil!

AUBREY.

You alarm  
With needless terror. You will wake at morn,  
And find the tempest overblown in sleep.

MORDAUNT.

You mock, and you a true believer! Oh,  
*To think how you will glory over me,*

Sounding your timbrels in your triumph song,  
Mordaunt a sinner !

But now mark me, mark !  
I vow myself to all the river-gods  
A victim ; and you may behold me borne  
Anointed with the ooze, and crowned with weeds  
In civic process to the sacred morgue.

In the grand function you may herald be,  
And tell the donor's name, who vowed, and why,  
His breath and body. " Lo this sacrifice  
From one, who would not yield to craven creeds."  
The Gallilean shall not conquer me !

AUBREY.

Fret not yourself. He conquers either way ;  
And so may calmly sit, until His foes  
Beneath His footstool lie, or ring His throne  
With circling adoration.

MORDAUNT

Turn this way,  
And in the quiet park give me one hour.  
I am sick and weary lolling all the day ;  
And then I grow distraught, and rage and rush !

The thing I feared has come upon me. All  
My life I've championed liberty of soul,—  
None doff the plume to show uncovered head  
In any presence. And the conscience plague,  
That soaks and rots the vigour of the mind  
With poison dews from dank, low-lying marshes

Of brooding thought, I shunned by constant shift  
Of place, and lived by travelling with the sun !

Who sleeps in lush, mist-covered swamps is fool  
To wake and wonder at the ague pulse !

Whene'er the sun took lower circuit in the sky,  
And chill winds blew, and flowers less perfume bore,  
I passed to sunnier creeds,—to feast and sing  
For soul and bird is sure the primal fact !

AUBREY.

And did unending summer build your bower,  
And fill the storehouse with unlaboured food ?

MORDAUNT.

With Clara came the signs of winter storm.  
I feared Humanitarianism had its times  
And seasons like the others,—had its spring  
With budding possibilities to fill  
The granaries for all the world's wide mouths ;  
But nipping winds and burning suns and rime  
Had spoiled the bounteous promise of its year.

AUBREY.

And whither is your flight ? Or why delayed  
The migratory course ?

MORDAUNT:

In evil hour

I tarried, like a water-fowl, which thro'  
A summer built its nest and reared its brood  
Far from intruders on a mountain tarn ;  
*But lingered*, slumbering 'mid the reeds at night,

And floating all the day along the lake ;  
Altho' the bracken burned between the clefts ;  
The bullrush and the sedgegrass rustled sere ;  
And the rowan hung its clusters overhead  
With ruddier light amid the thinning leaves ;  
While from the mountain peaks the sifted snow  
Bathed its white image in the morning wave !  
Tho' comrades whistled, sailing down the wind  
To softer climes, it lingered for its doom !  
One night the sudden cold invested all—  
Iron the land, and stone the liquid lanes—  
And manacled firm in ice the o'erstaying bird.

Then came a lumbering ploughboy to the shore,  
Shouldering with fear-fraught-pride an old flint gun,  
Which at a piping sedgebird he let fly ;  
And turned unknowing that his heedless skill  
Had left a broken wing to trail across  
The chilly waters of the once-loved haunt.  
And such my lot : monitions unobserved,  
I lingered in that creed, till sudden grief  
Of Clara, in a night, froze me in ice.

AUBREY.

And who with blundering aim of blunderbuss  
Fulfilled misfortune, broke the frost-bound wing ?

MORDAUNT.

“ Marian,” a shadowy name !

AUBREY.

What hurt from her ?

MORDAUNT.

A neighbour's grief is but an early frost,  
Which sharp and short, may bind and speedy loose :  
But gunshot wounds will trouble highest skill.  
There is the pellet, should you curious be,  
That barred my course in skiey altitudes.  
'Tis an uncanny thing—this murder tinct  
Spread thro' the paper folds, her very life ;  
And see this golden trinket—afterward  
They generously rendered back to me  
The sometime proofs conclusive of my crime !

AUBREY.

But now 'tis innocent gold, and pretty too.

MORDAUNT.

Why, man, it is the albatross, that's hung  
Around my neck. I think 'tis it that drives  
Insane disturbance thro' my brain of guilt.  
Ah me, she told a piteous story of it,—  
'That I'll not touch on,—'twas for "Marian,"  
This tempest-gatherer, who has sunk unseen  
Into some ocean cave, and green-eyed sits  
Brewing some harm.

AUBREY.

Why fear you aught in this ?

The reverse scroll has writ, "Jno. viii. 11."

MORDAUNT.

It lies embedded rankling in my thought,  
*That refrain*, "Sin no more ! go, sin no more."

Still she opposed me with that piteous cry,  
"What will you do with me, philosopher,  
Low, fallen, soiled, and broken in my heart?"

And I had nothing for her grief and stain,  
Save half a sneer and half a laugh, tho' truth  
To tell I could have gladlier wept with her.

But when she saw that I was penniless  
To buy a morsel for her hunger pangs,  
Lo she uncovered me a hidden pot  
Of manna gathered in the wilderness  
Under this Moses. True, some fears had risen,  
Lest it should melt away beneath the sun  
Of modern dogmas.

AUBREY.

Were you powerless?  
Could not the focussed Science of the age  
Prevail to liquefy her paltry store  
Of coriander seed, or breed in 't worms?

MORDAUNT.

Sin was aforesaid pleasure unallowed  
By greedy-souled possessors;—luscious fruit,  
That dropped uneaten from the boughs to rot,  
And spread unsanitary fumes;—broad acred parks,  
That starved the over-multiplying deer,  
Because no poacher broke the exclusive fence.

I learn there may be poison berries, bright  
To eye, and sweet to taste, with griping pains  
For sensual appetites. I also learn,



There may be iron bars, which safely hedge  
Us off from ravenous teeth and cruel claws.'

AUBREY.

A lowly pupil, tho' perhaps a late !

MORDAUNT.

Think not I jeopardise the great reform.  
The world-renowned inventions grew to crowned  
Perfections of themselves, themselves the crown  
And glory of their age. 'Tis head of Jove  
Alone that gives Minerva panoplied,  
And trained in martial movement from the birth.

Our great reform must grow. Man yet shall reign  
In undisputed lordship o'er himself.  
We only add a figure to the count  
To make the perfect sum ; we only add  
Another harmony to make the chord  
Complete with stringed and winded instruments.

AUBREY.

Perfection humbly waiting on to-morrow !

MORDAUNT.

Remember how oblivious of the din  
We trod our Dublin streets, until we passed  
Beneath the College gateway, and the sudden silence  
Struck on the ear, and the green Freshman stared  
To see what stones of quiet arched the roof,  
And gave a weird existence to a whisper.

I walked thro' life ; and sin jarred, groaned, and ground  
*The pavement into fluid, spattering mud—*

---

The hardest hearts and sternest wills reduced  
To immoral slush. Grant that we heeded not ;  
Ignored the grinding power and pain of sin ;  
Chattered our lightsome talk, and formed our creeds  
For multiplied resemblances of one,  
Projected phantasms on a well-chalked screen,—  
Not for the moiling many, various hearts,  
And various heads, and many-tinted lots.

There came this sudden lull, when overarched  
By Clara's grief, I woke, I started up  
To consciousness, and heard the lightest sigh  
That sin educed from conscience-stricken heart.

Now I confess sin is ! nay more, that all  
Philosophies and modern sciences  
Have walked the streets with unobservant ears,  
Or sat in academic silences apart.

One only ventured in amid the rush  
To snatch the fallen.

AUBREY.

Whose this honour, pray ?

MORDAUNT.

Jesus of Nazareth. No harm to give  
The honour due ; but eighteen hundred years  
Have made the vesture old. The age has grown  
With larger limbs : and vaster thoughts are lodged  
Within its breast than the old mantle covered.

AUBREY.

What mean you then ? What loom provides the new ?

MORDAUNT.

We must provide three things, full easily done,—  
A power to renovate the race, and check  
Meantime transgression :—secondly, a power  
To win forgiveness from the injured breast,  
And a self-pardon in the injurer :  
And third, to reinstate in place the fallen.  
Herein will Science find her noblest task.

AUBREY.

Altho' you had not e'en a ragged clout  
To throw round Clara's shivering heart, it seems  
The shadowy Marian had substantial cloak,  
Woven throughout of these your triple threads.

MORDAUNT.

Our human renovation, self-contained,  
Will stand complete with bounties infinite !

AUBREY.

In college days you generously declined  
To snatch the laurel wreath from Shakespeare's brow.

Prophet and poet in one cradle nursed,  
And drinking from the same Castalian spring,  
Is dogma in your sect,—if equal born,  
Allow them equal rights ; with equal hand  
Warn back encroachers from the boundary line  
Of Jesus' gospel, as from Shakespeare's verse.

'Tis blasphemy a poetaster shuns  
To sound his tragic blare, and warn the crowd  
*To burn their Desdemonas, Hamlets—such as mere*

---

Lay figures ; and to grasp with welcoming hand  
The flesh and blood that stage it on his world.

But lo, humility forgets to bend  
Her downward eye, and soften her meek voice ;  
But this once only takes the seat of pride,  
And vaunts a gospel that in floating ark  
Carries the living hopes high over all  
The peaks of Jesu's submerged Calvary.

## MORDAUNT.

Submerged ! Aye the raining years have rolled  
Their gathered waters,—not a point appears  
On which or dove or raven can alight !

## AUBREY.

Think you so ? Never sun has set in storm  
Of winter, or in summer calm, but hearts  
Have turned, like homeing doves to windowed cotes  
And found in HIM their rest. In ocean isle,  
And in the cities of wide, Pagan lands,  
Cheerily as soldier to the beat of drum,  
Women and maids and children meet their death  
To the brave music of His name alone.

Scorn as you will, let humankind be free  
To make their choice, and say their verdict truth  
Of tested choice,—the Nazarene will wear  
The palm. He stood a simple man, unknown  
Beyond His hamlet, and He wound His way  
Into the heart of sorrow and of bliss,—  
A sun that makes the diamond joy to flash

Its brilliance, and in darkness wear a smile ;—  
A star that glitters in the blue-black sky,  
And lights, till the grey dawn, the gulfs of gloom ;—  
An eye that looks compassion, when the stare  
Of stony eyes looks marble on waste woe ;—  
A hand that grasps with friendship in the lorn  
And wildering wilderness of the crowded streets ;—  
A voice that gives companionship, when all  
Have left the soul to watch beside the hope  
That died the last of all its fated kin !

The children babbling in their innocent glee,  
The youthful in the glamour of their prime,  
The lusty glorying in their tireless strength,  
The aged weighted by his bent grey head,—  
The widow in her haunted, homeless home,  
The orphan in her chill and cheerless world,  
The sinner in his judgment-echoing ear,  
The fallen in her plague-infested breast,  
Are one with Him,—*that* the one miracle  
And mystery of this credulous, faithless age !

The multitudes, the multitudes would fail  
In various, all-adapted sympathy to one,  
As ONE to various multitudes abounds !

MORDAUNT.

Fantasy, madmen's ravings, hypocrites'  
Sham arguments, hysterics of the women,  
A brain disease at rounding of the moon  
*That breeds kin howling to the dog's !*

## AUBREY.

How know you truth and reason, joy and pain,  
That spring not personal? 'Tis good to cry  
"Sham! shame!" upon my testimony.  
I love my friend—deny that friendship's sweet!  
I hate my foe—proclaim the feeling nought!  
Nathless I sweetly love and strongly hate.

Men fight for sacred liberty, and prove  
In death the patriot's love of fatherland:  
By syllogistic argument confute  
The emotional assumption for our breast,  
Which could not own a feeling so demure,  
As never bodied forth itself in form  
And shape before your eyes. Yet still men die  
In spite of logic for the hearth and home.

And tho' this Friend of myriads be no friend  
Alas to you, it blots not out their sun.

## MORDAUNT.

This is unfriendly. Wounded came I nigh,  
And straight you pepper all my raw, quick flesh!  
I asked an alms; you tender none, but pluck  
My scanty-furnished wallet from my hand!

Hush! I would hear no more of Nazareth!  
I'm sick of it. The plague is on me, prick  
Me not with more inoculating virus.

Give answer, or refuse, where Edwin is.  
What stirs this Pauline vehemence to seize  
Quidnunc disciples in the market-place?

Forget you, all is stale the babblers say  
In this dull eventide ; their day is spent !

AUBREY.

What stirs me so ? These only, Edwin's pen,  
And Mordaunt's tongue !

MORDAUNT.

Ha ! Edwin, where is he ?

AUBREY.

'Mid savages, discipling them to life  
And name of Jesus.

MORDAUNT.

Indeed ! Sunday-schooling !

Six little goody bodies all in row,  
And one "chief sinner" hurling stony texts  
To give them spiritual bumps of piety !

AUBREY.

He is a man ! and more an upright man !  
And crown of all, a Christian gentleman !

His letter reached me here this very morn  
With loving gratulatory delight  
In my new fame. He fondles it, as 'twere  
His infant born, and he far o'er the sea ;  
And gives me charge to train my poems all  
For lifelong service in the Master's house.

And then he tells in simple phrase, like one  
Who wrote "The former treatise," how the NAME  
Is glorified among wild Indian tribes,  
*As in the Asian cities long ago.*

MORDAUNT.

'Tis pityful to spoil the naked savage  
Into a mean, hat-wearing hypocrite.

AUBREY.

His Indians would be savages in schools  
And canting churches ; but in pure clean life  
Would shame the vaunting prophets of your sect !

MORDAUNT.

Why not exclude that old-world pestilence ?  
In primitive life seek primitive purity.

AUBREY.

Perhaps in geologic times a cat  
By evolution from a tiger may  
Purr peaceful at the fireside : but who live  
In household with evolving tigers, feel  
No doubt the bloody claw, until complete  
The metamorphosis ; and fain would have  
The feline domesticity at once.

So Edwin overleaps the slow result  
Of generations, and accepts the man  
" Newborn " to grow into a gentler life,  
Altho' in savage habitudes ; and sees  
The leopard with the kid lie down in peace.

MORDAUNT.

Say where this marvel grows. I needs must draw  
Apart from staring eyes. I am a mark,—  
It may be o'erwrought fancy,—whereat scorn  
Shoots her keen arrowy glances covertly ;



And all who pass me by in converse seem  
To damn me, or acquit. I must away,  
Until a season mantles o'er with grass  
This footway, unfrequented by their thoughts.

I too would hush this eager clamouring cry,  
That asks compliance with poor Clara's prayer  
To do a paltry justice to her name,  
And own my wrong.

AUBREY.

Roll off what burdening guilt,  
You please. But silence seals my lips, and gives  
No waymark for your creaking waggon wheels  
To bear and drop at Edwin's door their load,  
'To him a crushing sorrow for her fate,  
His bride, whose spousal torch was quenched in gloom  
And graced no nuptial rite. The wrong you did  
Has turned to Joseph's glory. In the land  
Where he a stranger was, they hang the love  
And honour of the tribes on him alone.

I thought within me I would barter all  
The heartless *eclat* of my poet praise  
From treacherous critics, lionising dames,  
And patronising plutocrats and lords  
For the rough fervour of their heart-whole troth.

MORDAUNT.

Ah, he was ever leader in the band ;  
Tho' in philosophy, like womankind,  
*He was too prone to follow.*

AUBREY.

Not in him

The power,—so failure taught,—to make the crowd  
Run after, as the irrigating stream  
In channelled course. Nor think you any man,  
Since the vast mountains lifted up their heads,  
And the smooth ocean pictured cloud and sky,  
Drew men, as HE from net and mart and plough,  
Forsaking all to follow,—not thro' blood  
And smoke and crash the plunder-winning sword.

MORDAUNT.

There is a weird craft in these loadstone men,  
Who draw their fellows. Some o'er pathless seas  
Guide haven-seeking barks. And some abstract  
The bolts which hold the strong-ribbed purposes  
In firm and shapely courses, and thus leave  
A mass of floating wreckage on the wave.

A power, this man's or others, drags me on  
Across the windless sea ; and idle sails,  
That swept me through the hissing foam, now hang  
Limp from the mast, or flap like muffled drums !

Tell me where Edwin hides ; and take my pledge,  
That Clara's fate by me is undisclosed.

AUBREY.

That promise given, I tell. But ere we pass  
Into the roaring street, tell me the death  
That Clara died, and whence the harm to you.

MORDAUNT.

*Occasion brought me on the river stairs,*

Fronting the palace of the Cross and Keys ;  
And some rough watermen with rude approach  
Jostled me sideways on the slippery steps.  
A tumbled, drabbled heap in careless carriage  
Borne upward by them, touched me with a hand  
That swayed from the limp arm.

Missing a foot,  
The hindmost bearer staggered back with oaths  
Foul spluttered by his comrade brute above.

A white face glanced at me with glassy eyes  
From out the tumbled heap. "Clara ! my God !" .  
I groaned with horror-stricken voice ; and took  
A brutal stare from him, who clutched his prize.  
"You 'll be aknowin' of her sir," said he.  
"Come topways, and you 'll see her pleasanter.  
Hard livin' this for poor folk like'to we,  
All day arowin' and we hooked but her."

Then resting on his knee, the upper leaned  
Down with a shark's look in his cold blue eye,  
And hoarsely whispered, "She has had a touch,  
We see, right of the breast. We saw the blood ;  
And so would see the p'lice. Might be reward  
Is posted. But so be, the gen'leman  
Would like to do it square, we 'll give her one  
Chance more: Or me and Bill will do her tidy,  
Out seaways with the runnin' tide, you see !  
Ha ! ha ! say done, sir Hundred ? fifty ? No !  
'Tis cheaper than the lawyers, mind you sir."

The lower monster, streaking off the mud  
From her pale features with his grimy hand,  
Strikes in, "And me an' him can swear you knew,  
And cried as guiltstruck, when you passed and saw ;  
Leastways we must if swore to tell the truth !  
And now she were a pretty one, warn't she ?"

Sick and indignant, as these vultures swooped  
Upon a crime, whose swiftly ending life  
Of undetection staggered to its death  
To leave a carcase for their ravenous gorge,  
I motioned upwards, "Scoundrels ! hangman's noose.  
Should be your rich reward. Full many deeds  
Like this you've been abettors in for gold !  
Go up. I will avenge this lady's death !"  
With horrid oaths, and darkly hinting nods,  
They climbed, corpse-cumbered, up the steep, stone stairs ;  
Then signed me to behold the bloody stains,  
Eyeing me keenly, greedily, the while :  
So do the carrion birds with heavy flap  
Of wing withdraw to safety from the stroke  
Of the expiring victim, and in circle stand,  
Teaching their hunger patience.

While I gazed,  
Numbed with the sense of all this horror, like  
A deluge roaring from an ice-cold cataract ;  
A villain with the ready hand of use  
Slit up the soft-soaked cinctures from her breast,  
And callous bared its secret loveliness

To point a blue-red line, that thread-like crossed  
The marble whiteness where a sister globe  
Leaned to its twin.

His bleared eye scanned my face,  
Detected guilt being coveted gold to him.

His comrade deftly drew aside a fold  
Of paper, close embosomed where the keen  
Knife severed it in twain. A sanguine tinge  
Still stained it where the letters "Marian"  
Were written. "That to me," I said; "I know  
Its purpose."

With a grin of bad complaisance  
Forth reached his hand to tender it, but felt  
And quick purloined this golden trinket thence.  
I saw its glitter, and a sudden wrench  
Unclosed his cold-numbered fingers, and despoiled  
Them of the pilfered prey.

Rising in wrath,  
A buffet stretched him on his kindred filth;  
Whence with vociferous blasphemy he snatched  
His vengeance, raging like a famished wolf,  
That smells the hunter's cachè.

His fellow, once  
Again, to sell their service proffer made—  
An added sum to veil this violence.

My scorn refused to cover crime with gold,  
Or shield complicity; but bade them fetch  
*Such aid as needs to honour due the dead,*

And statute forms comply to—"then there's gold,  
Pardoned the robbery, and the sued-for bribe."

He gave a sign ; and on their trusty oaths,  
The slavelings of the law compelled me take  
The felon's cell on charge of murder wrought,  
And gold-bribed burial of the accusing corpse !

AUBREY.

A loathsome lodging ; but its compassing  
Enthralled your liberty not one fouled day.  
And the black stain—the hours like dropping rain  
Will fall on it, and wash it to oblivion.

MORDAUNT.

Not one fouled day ! The city's wickedness  
Sought me ; the vortex of its swirling waves,  
The very apex of its downward rush  
Roared over me ! The witnesses of crime  
In every quarter hurried hitherward,  
Measured my height, and mapped my lineaments,  
And canvassed all my fitness for their oaths.

AUBREY.

Friends—

MORDAUNT.

What use they ? No man but woman's face,  
And Satan's art can damn with bloody deeds !  
And I was sworn to by king's evidence !

AUBREY.

Evidence ! None to spread a fog in court,  
And blur the vision to wrong issues there.

MORDAUNT.

Oh! Well, they wear a wig in court always  
 To signify the wit, if not the hair,  
 Age-worn, is lost,—the senile judge, who sits  
 And sleeps above; the rampant foolishness,  
 That raves and frets below—

AUBREY.

How gained release?

MORDAUNT.

Aye, aye, resume the story! so I come  
 Full fifty times aday. The cloud uplifts,  
 And for a moment sunshine lights the land;  
 And then the vapour coldly closes in,  
 And all I feel and see around, within,  
 Is the enveloping of Clara's fate.

I rail at men, or laugh at woman's jest,—  
 Travel, or tarry,—mope alone, or push  
 Thro' crowds,—the interminable green and blue,  
 The earth and sky of life is Clara, Clara!  
 What is it, Aubrey, follows thus Orestes!

AUBREY.

Finish what may be finished of the story first.

MORDAUNT.

'Tis common crime the rest. That shadowy name,  
 But most potential substance, "Marian,"  
 Had hurled like Neptune's trident 'mid the waves  
 Another shadow name "the Christ," and woke  
*Such perturbation*, that the surge and clouds

Commingle, left no solid ground or space  
Unstrewn by wreckage on the sea or shore  
For outcast Clara.

At length she thought some God  
Had made a cloudy interspace, where calm  
Might rock to spiritual peace the shattered soul.

"One other would she pilot o'er the bar,"  
She said ; "then bid farewell to life and woe."

'Twas true foreboding. 'Twas the beating surf,  
That lifts its voice above the broken noises  
Of wind and wave, and tells the rock is near  
To drifting sailor.

Two along the brink  
Of the hoarse river did she cross one night.

A light word dropped she picked up carelessly,  
As idle fingers catch a floating straw,  
The vacant mind unheeding, toy with it,  
Or draw it through the nipping teeth and lips,—  
And shiver into knowledge, "here is blood."

So she had caught the faintness of the tone,  
And onward passed in brooding weariness,  
And tossed the light word back from thought to thought,  
Till suddenly she threw her arms on high,  
And cried a low, exceeding bitter cry,  
"Oh not another victim, God! O God!  
Her voice and *his*! So help me, God! I'll save her!"

Back on the path she sped, and seized her arm  
Whom thro' the city's wilderness she tracked,



And with a passion panting in her voice,  
But fiercely curbed, she bade *him* go forthwith.

‘He—he had wronged her villainously sure ;  
‘She had revenged her wrong full cruelly :  
‘Now she would baulk him,’ said he, ‘spitefully’ ;  
And quick with fury struck her wrathfully  
A deadly stroke, from which she reeled, and passed  
From troubled life into the troubled tide.

The two gazed still where hurrying bubbles marked  
Her soon obliterated grave.

A rough hand laid

On either shoulder needed not a voice  
To ring the fatal summons in their ear.

AUBREY.

Weeping and wailing, woe and gnashing teeth,  
Sin nurtures here ; whatever brood the sage  
Would rather train to shelter ’neath her wing !  
Beyond the eyeseen, fools may count a hatch,  
Where all their addled eggs chip and give swans !  
But how escaped you ?

MORDAUNT.

How? She who had stood

Appalled beside the murderer, and lay  
In durance with him, cleansed herself from blood,  
And named his victim. Thus was slowly knit  
The doer and his doing. I was free.  
*And lo a strange thing,—it was “Marian”*

Who dressed that lone corpse for its burying,  
And laid it honourably in the mould,—  
In her portentous shadowing of fate  
Clara had dreamed it!

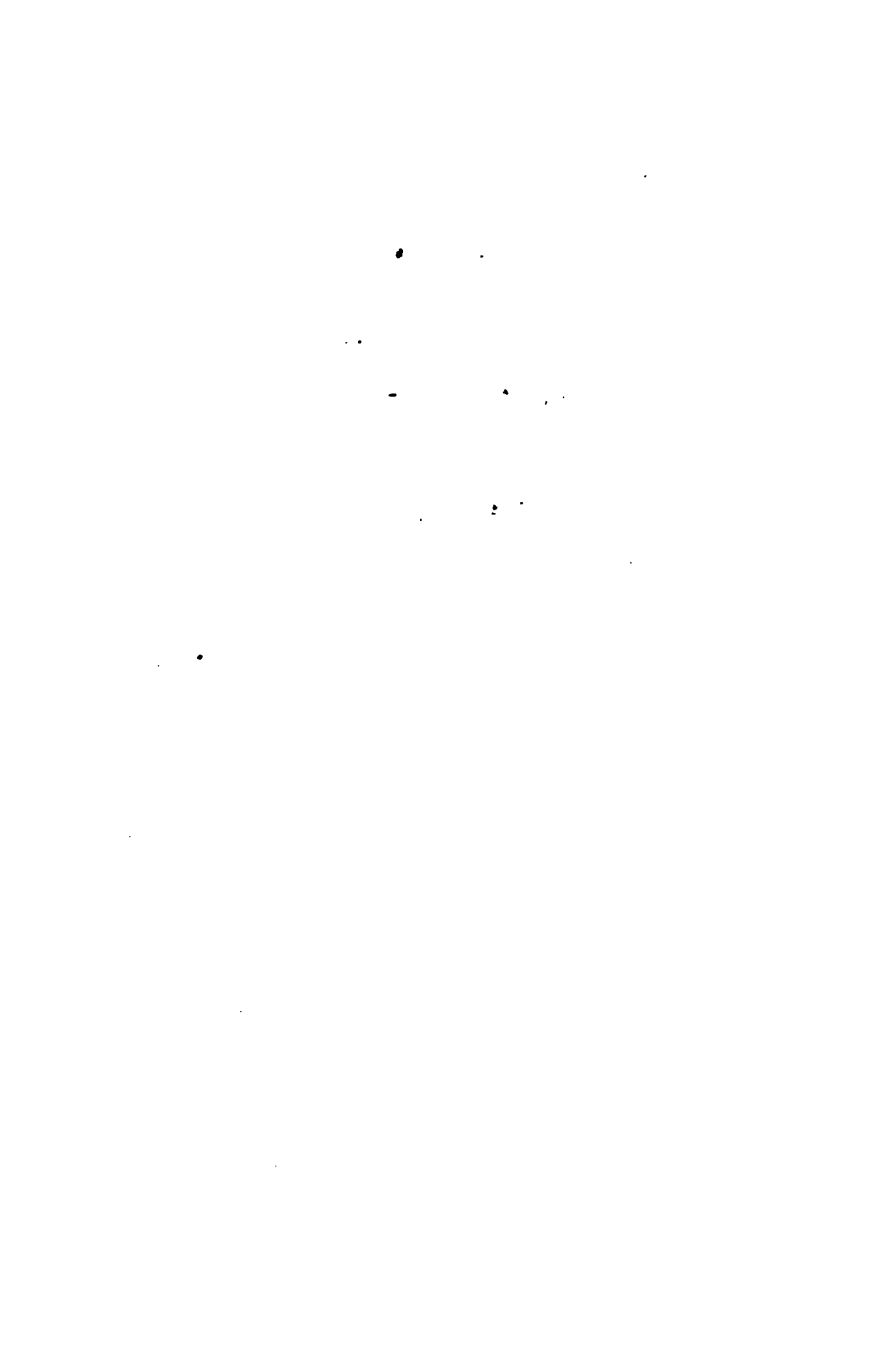
AUBREY.

Came it so to pass!

---

**End of the First Part.**





*WILL SHORTLY BE PUBLISHED.*

---

A TALE

OF

Two Fair Women;

OR

THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD."

---

II. MARIAN.

---

*A Romance of Modern Life.*

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial matters. The text outlines various methods for organizing and storing data, including digital databases and physical filing systems. It also mentions the need for regular audits and reviews to ensure the integrity of the information.

2. The second part of the document focuses on the role of communication in achieving organizational goals. It highlights the importance of clear and concise communication, both internally and externally. The text provides guidelines for effective communication, such as using appropriate language, listening actively, and providing feedback. It also discusses the benefits of open communication, including improved collaboration and decision-making.

3. The third part of the document addresses the issue of resource management. It discusses the importance of identifying and allocating resources effectively to support the organization's mission. The text provides strategies for managing resources, such as prioritizing tasks, delegating responsibilities, and monitoring progress. It also mentions the need for flexibility and adaptability in resource management, as circumstances may change over time.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining a positive and productive work environment. It highlights the role of leadership in creating a supportive and motivating atmosphere. The text provides guidelines for effective leadership, such as being transparent, fair, and approachable. It also discusses the benefits of a positive work environment, including increased employee engagement and productivity.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the importance of staying up-to-date with industry trends and developments. It highlights the need for continuous learning and professional development. The text provides strategies for staying informed, such as attending conferences, taking courses, and networking with industry professionals. It also mentions the benefits of staying current, including improved decision-making and competitive advantage.



